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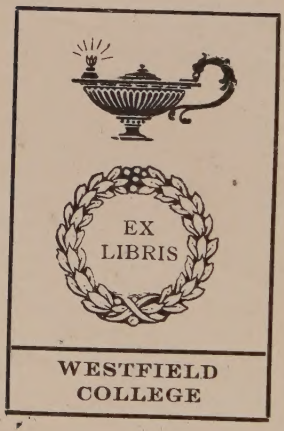

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SIR CHARLES HANBURY WILLIAMS AND EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY

SIR CHARLES HANBURY WILLIAMS & EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY (1747–58)

BY

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TO

SIR RICHARD LODGE

PREFACE

THE chief sources on which this contribution to the study of eighteenth-century diplomacy is based are the voluminous collections of official and private papers in the Public Record Office and the MS. Department of the British Museum. Hundreds of volumes of letters, despatches, and other papers have been read, sifted, and their evidence weighed. In addition, these sources have been supplemented to a considerable extent by the results of two visits to the Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, at Paris, and of a visit to the Newport (Mon.) Public Library, which possesses a MS. collection including, so far as can be ascertained, practically all Williams's official papers as a British minister, as well as the private diary which he kept at Berlin, and other private papers. Permission to examine another part of Williams's private papers, which is at present in the possession of Mr T. F. Fenwick, Thirlestane House, Cheltenham, was refused.

Although the narrative is based throughout on the original sources, whether in MS. or in print,[1] the secondary authorities have not been neglected.[2] Only the necessity of reducing the bulk of notes has prevented me from giving much fuller references to them, and discussing more frequently and at greater length interesting but minor controversial points.

While the footnotes and appendices reveal my indebtedness to previous workers in this field of historical research, it is my pleasant duty to acknowledge in this place my many debts of other kinds. The assurance of a generous grant from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland has greatly facilitated publication. The editor and publishers of the *English Historical Review* have kindly permitted me to reprint Chapter II, which originally appeared in the *Review* (January

[1] See Appendix A for a complete list of primary authorities.
[2] See Appendix B for a list of the principal secondary authorities cited in the footnotes.

1929), under the title "Saxony in the War of the Austrian Succession." I tender also sincere thanks to the librarians whose unfailing courtesy and helpfulness have been sorely tried by my demands, and notably to the Librarian and staff of the University Library, Edinburgh. Finally, my cordial thanks are due to my father, and to my uncle, the Rev. Alexander Horn, B.D., for valuable help in reading the proofs, and in other ways; and to my wife, who has with equal zeal and discretion relieved me of the worst penalty of authorship—the irksome and laborious task of compiling an index.

D. B. HORN

December 1929

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PART I

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The British diplomatic service in the eighteenth century—Sir Charles Hanbury Williams—Reasons for his entering the diplomatic service—His relations with Fox and Pelham—His appointment as envoy to Saxony.

THE British diplomatic service in the mid-eighteenth century was recruited in the same haphazard fashion as the rudimentary home Civil Service. Patronage flourished, but merit, always provided that its claims were backed by powerful recommendations, carried more weight in the diplomatic than in the home service, because few diplomatic posts were mere sinecures. The lower posts were normally filled by men of humble origin who had found means to secure the backing of a powerful patron. Solomon Dayrolle, resident at The Hague, is said to have owed his position to his complaisance towards his wife's intrigue with a former British ambassador to the States-General. Others, again, such as George Cressener at Liége, began as unofficial spies, and secured the rank of resident or minister as a reward for their dangerous service to the British Government. More frequently, however, these posts were filled by men with quite good connections who lacked the spur of ambition and were content to settle down with a comfortable salary and nominal duties in the congenial society of a minor capital. The best known of these sinecurists is Horace Mann, the most favoured correspondent of Horace Walpole, who represented Britain at the Tuscan court from 1737–79. His record period of office is closely approached by that of the envoy at Copenhagen, Walter Titley (1729–67). More interesting, since their careers illustrate the peaceful penetration of England by ambitious and impecunious Scots, are the Scotsmen who secured a footing on the lowest rungs of the diplomatic ladder and steadily climbed up. They may be said to take the place of those professional diplomatists of foreign origin, such as Sir Luke Schaub, who played

a prominent part in British diplomacy in the early part of the eighteenth century.

The chief posts, however, in the diplomatic service were normally filled not by men who had made diplomacy their profession, but by titled amateurs, who owed their position to their influential connections. Such were Sandwich at The Hague and Albemarle at Versailles. Not infrequently, however, some of these posts, always excepting the French embassy, were filled by humbler men who had worked their way to the top—Keene at Madrid, Robinson at Vienna, Guy Dickens at Stockholm and Petersburg. The Secretaries of State were not infrequently chosen from the ranks of these successful diplomatists—*e.g.*, Harrington, Chesterfield, Holderness, and Robinson. The higher ranks of the diplomatic service, therefore, normally included a few men who regarded it as a means of entry to the Cabinet.

Although it had certain advantages, the defects of this method—or lack of method—in the recruitment of British diplomatists are evident to the eyes of the twentieth century; some of these weaknesses are clearly revealed by the appointment, and still more the retention in the service after his failure at Berlin, of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams. Williams did not enter the diplomatic service until he was nearly forty years of age, when his character and habits of life had long been formed. A younger son of Major John Hanbury of Pontypool, he received the orthodox education of an English gentleman at Eton, where he was a contemporary of Fox and Pitt.[1] After making the obligatory grand tour of Western Europe, he inherited the estate of his godfather, Charles Williams, and settled down in England. His time was divided between politics, literature, and society. In the Commons he was for long one of Walpole's docile, silent voters. Outside of the House he gave Walpole much more effective support by writing venomous lampoons against the Opposition leaders. He was rewarded for his political services with the office of Paymaster of the Marines, and discharged the duties of this office in the most perfunctory way.[2] Greater

[1] Jesse, *Selwyn*, i, 179; Williams, *Pitt*, i, 33.

[2] Harris to Williams (undated) in Newport Papers: "Here's the devil to pay about the marines . . . no subsistence issued since 24th ult. nor a

success attended his cultivation of the Muses, and his verses were rapturously applauded by the coteries to which he belonged. Some critics, including that *arbiter elegantiarum* Horace Walpole, professed to regard him as the greatest English poet of the generation. In society his satirical bent and inordinate appetite for scandal made him many enemies, while his colossal conceit was a byword even among his friends. However gratified he was by this real or assumed admiration of his verses, he felt even more deeply his failure to obtain high political office, for which he quite wrongly believed himself to be admirably equipped.

If his own account could be accepted, Williams at the beginning of his diplomatic career would belong to the amateur class of British diplomatist. "I am here," he wrote from Dresden to Robinson, British minister at Vienna,

> a good deal retired and in a melancholy way which I have been in ever since the death of my friend Mr Winnington,[1] in whom my country lost a useful citizen and I the man upon earth I loved the best. 'Twas upon his death I begged the King to send me abroad and resigned a very profitable employment to come out of a country where I missed an object that I esteemed and honoured very highly and where everything daily put me in mind of him.[2]

In this letter Williams is very careful to say nothing of the publication of his notorious ode on the marriage of the Duchess of Manchester,[3] which brought down upon him the wrath, not only of the friends and relations of the newly married couple, but of numerous irascible Irish gentlemen who resented an insult offered in the ode to their nation:

> Nature, indeed, denies them sense
> But gives them legs and impudence
> That beats all understanding.[4]

---

man of them voted in Parliament." *Cf.* Harris to Williams, 29 January, 1746 (Newport Papers).

[1] April 1746 (Walpole, *Letters*, ii, 190–1).

[2] In Add. MSS. 32825, f. 198.

[3] The composition of this ode is attributed by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (*Letters* (ed. Wharncliffe), ii, 367) to Williams's resentment at the action of the Duchess of Manchester in urging Williams's wife not to tolerate his ill-treatment of her.

[4] Williams, *Works*, i, 93.

To escape, it was said, from a series of duels Williams fled to South Wales. His enemies, who were many, called his flight cowardice;[1] his friends, who were few, vainly urged him to return to London and refute the imputation.

The death of Winnington and this incident were, however, not the cause but merely the occasion of Williams's entry into the diplomatic service. As early as 1737 Walpole had proposed to send Williams on a special mission to Don Carlos to give him formal recognition as King of Naples, but Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, had objected and secured royal nomination for another candidate.[2] Horace Walpole (senior), however, encouraged Williams in his ambitions. "I am glad," he wrote,

> to find that you are willing to turn your thoughts to business. . . . I am no less pleased that you have hinted your mind to [Sir R. Walpole], which I would advise you to do by your frequent visits and addresses. Your person and manner cannot, considering your merit and your circumstances, be impertinent or importunate, and believe me, among ye number of candidates that have or that think they have merit, being constantly in the way is of great service, and often by surprise and as it were against the will of the person in power gets ye better of greater merit that is modest and backward.[3]

Williams was neither modest nor backward in pressing his claims upon the "person in power," and at last, in 1744, on the ground of "what had passed in Lord Orford's time,"[4] he was given the red ribband of the Order of the Bath, but this did nothing to satisfy his desire for office. By this time, however, Williams's dearest friend, Winnington, was Paymaster of the Forces, while Fox, another of Williams's intimates, was closely associated with the Premier, Henry Pelham, and did his best to win his favour for Williams.[5] Williams's services to Fox in the latter's runaway match with Lady Caroline Lennox[6] nearly cost

[1] *E.g.*, Jesse, *Selwyn*, i, 115, 154.
[2] Horace Walpole (senior) to Williams, 10 September, N.S., 1737, in Newport Papers; Hervey, *Memoirs of George II*, ii, 452–4.
[3] Horace Walpole (senior) to Williams, 10 September, N.S.; *cf.* Walpole's letters of 4 October, N.S., 1737, and 3/14 August, 1739, all in Newport Papers.
[4] Pelham to Williams, 14 May (1744), in Newport Papers.
[5] Ilchester, i, 92.
[6] Williams to Fox, 9, 15 May, 1744, in Liechtenstein, *Holland House*, i, 60–6; Fox to Williams, 9 October, 1744, in Newport Papers; Walpole, *Letters*, ii, 22–3.

Williams his knighthood, but cemented a friendship which was to be the basis of his diplomatic career. Fox's relations with Pelham steadily improved,[1] and when, in May 1746, he became Secretary at War he was at last able to gratify the desires of his friend. Williams would have liked to be envoy at Turin,[2] and at one time it was reported that he would be sent to Berlin;[3] but ultimately, on 23 December, 1746,[4] he was appointed envoy extraordinary to the Elector of Saxony,[5] Augustus III, who was also, as Augustus II, King of Poland. At the commencement of his diplomatic career Williams probably intended to remain abroad only for a year or two, but very soon he acquired a taste for the easy life of a Continental capital with a modicum of business. His brother's failure to secure his re-election to Parliament in 1748 removed one main reason for a speedy return to England.[6] Thenceforth Williams must be grouped with the professional diplomatists rather than with the amateurs, and his ultimate aim was to join the select band of foreign ministers who had found in diplomacy a back door to the Cabinet.

[1] Liechtenstein, *Holland House*, i, 66.
[2] Williams to Newcastle, 2 February, 1747, in Add. MSS. 32710, f. 150—a letter which indicates that Williams was at this time the follower of Pelham. *Cf.* Williams, *Works*, iii, 79.
[3] Walpole, *Letters*, ii, 255–6; Gray's *Letters* (ed. Tovey), i, 180.
[4] Pells General Posting Book in P.R.O. (E. 403.2678).
[5] Chesterfield to Williams, "Sunday morning," in Newport Papers.
[6] Williams to Rev. Mr Birt, 5 July, 1748, in *Works*, iii, 74.

CHAPTER II

SAXONY IN THE WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION

Union of Saxony and Poland in 1697—Polish policy of the Saxon kings—Hostility of Prussia to Saxony-Poland—Prussian invasion of Saxony—Saxon attempts to mediate between Austria and France—Treaty of Dresden and subsequent friction between Austria and Saxony—Saxony renews her attempts to reconcile Austria and France—Brühl decides to obtain subsidies from France and rejects offers of the Maritime Powers—Maurice de Saxe intervenes to secure France's acceptance of Brühl's demands—Terms of the Franco-Saxon treaty of subsidy—Effects of the treaty on Saxony's relations with the Maritime Powers and the imperial courts—Divergent views of France and Saxony—Marriage of the Dauphin and Maria Josepha, daughter of Augustus III—Rivalry of Prussia and Saxony for the favour of France—Conclusion of the Treaty of the Two Empresses—Saxony is invited to accede to the treaty—Saxony's difficult and dangerous position.

In 1697 the election of Augustus II of Saxony to the Polish throne transformed Saxony from a German principality into a European Power, and opened a new period in Saxon history. For the next seventy years, until the final collapse of Saxon hopes in 1764, the policy of Saxony was determined by the desire to perpetuate the union of Saxony and Poland and to consolidate the combined state as a great power in the centre of Europe. But the resources of Saxony proved insufficient to enable her to make use of the growing anarchy in Poland in her own interests. The attempt merely distracted Saxony's attention from imperial politics and exhausted her resources.

If Europe had remained in the political condition of the seventeenth century Saxony might have been successful, but the rise of Prussia and the westward advance of Russia rendered her attempt to turn a precarious tenure of the Polish throne into a complete control of Polish resources an impracticable dream.[1] Russia and Prussia shared a secular tradition of hostility to Poland,

[1] It is true that the rise of Prussia increased the cordiality of the relations of Austria and Saxony-Poland. But since 1726 Austria had been the ally of Poland's other enemy, Russia, and in any case could not be counted upon to give resolute support owing to her preoccupation with her major interests in Western Europe.

and were agreed upon the necessity for preventing the consolidation of Saxony-Poland. Russia was content in the first half of the eighteenth century to support the house of Wettin on the Polish throne, while vetoing any attempt to strengthen the monarchy and increasing her own hold over the factious nobility which dominated the unhappy country. Brandenburg-Prussia, on the other hand, was from the first diametrically opposed to the union of Saxony and Poland. Within the Empire Brandenburg and Saxony had long been rivals, but had retained the habit of co-operating in religious matters. The Elector of Brandenburg was jealous of the elevation of the Wettins to the kingly rank in 1697, and managed to secure the title of king in Prussia for his own house in 1701 as a reward for assisting the Emperor against France. The duchy of East Prussia, from which the title was taken, was an insignificant province in comparison with the enormous extent and great traditions of Poland. The Hohenzollerns, however, had an hereditary title, the Wettins merely an inferior elective kingship. Moreover, to secure the Polish title the Elector of Saxony had had to become a Roman Catholic. His headship of the *corpus evangelicorum* became a glaring anomaly, and, in spite of his efforts to retain his position, the effective leadership of Protestant Germany passed gradually to Brandenburg. The secular and ecclesiastical rivalry of Brandenburg and Saxony, confirmed and strengthened by the conflicting interests of Prussia and Poland, made Brandenburg-Prussia the arch-enemy of Saxony-Poland.

Frederick II's unprovoked attack in 1740 upon Austria and his victory at Mollwitz placed Saxony at the parting of the ways. Count Brühl, since 1738 the favourite of Augustus III and director of Saxon policy, hesitated. Saxony had claims to the Austrian succession, but it was very doubtful whether it would pay her better to assert these claims in concert with Maria Theresa's other rivals or to support Maria Theresa against them in return for substantial concessions. Common hostility to Prussia, a disinclination on Saxony's part to follow the lead of her successful rival, and the influence of the Electress—an Austrian archduchess—tended to draw Austria and Saxony together, but in the end Frederick II and Belleisle adroitly secured the accession of Saxony to the anti-Austrian coalition by the tempting

offer of Moravia and Upper Silesia, which would unite territorially Saxony with Poland. Saxony, however, proved a very half-hearted and incapable ally, and withdrew from the struggle by the Treaty of Dresden (7 September, 1742) without securing any tangible gains. Her *rapprochement* with Austria was accelerated by Prussia's annexation of Silesia, which hemmed Saxony in on the north and east, shattered Saxon hopes of connecting Saxony and Poland, and made Prussia indisputably the leading German state after Austria. When France and Prussia renewed their insidious proposals in the summer of 1744, before the beginning of the second Silesian war, they were rejected, even although the death of the Emperor Charles VII on 18 January, 1745, allowed them to offer Augustus the additional bribe of the imperial crown,[1] and Saxony entered the struggle on the Austrian side. Henceforth the essential aim of Saxon policy was to crush Prussia—her successful rival in Germany and the main obstacle to Saxon schemes in Poland.

The Austro-Saxon alliance secured the pecuniary support of the Maritime Powers by the Treaty of Warsaw (January 1745), which brought Saxony into intimate relations with Britain for the first time. The allied offensive in Silesia, however, completely broke down, and the Austrians were defeated at Hohenfriedeberg and Sohr. A Prussian army entered Saxony, defeated the Saxons at Hennersdorf, and advanced on Dresden. Frederick II, hoping to break the Austro-Saxon alliance, then offered to make a separate peace with Saxony on the basis of the *status quo* in accordance with the Convention of Hanover, which he had just concluded with Britain (August 1745). This offer was refused by the Saxon Cabinet in spite of the threatening military situation, because it now saw a chance of crushing Prussia by an alternative policy, which it had been tentatively pursuing since the end of 1744. This scheme was nothing less than to destroy the "old system," which had given Prussia her opportunity for self-aggrandisement, by reconciling the houses of Bourbon and Habsburg,[2] whose rivalry had for centuries determined the political system of Europe. Saxon mediation had had no chance

[1] *Mémoires de Frédéric II*, i, 272–3.

[2] See Broglie, *Maria Theresa, 1744–6* ; *cf.* Borkowsky, *Die Englische Friedensvermittlung im Jahre 1745*, 46 ff.

of success so long as France insisted on the inclusion of Prussia in the proposed understanding, since Maria Theresa only desired peace with France to allow her to concentrate her forces against Prussia.

Frederick's conclusion of the Convention of Hanover made the French ministry willing to conclude, jointly with Spain, a separate peace with Austria.[1] Negotiations were secretly opened at Dresden, but had little prospect of a successful conclusion. On the one side, despite her pique at Prussian desertion, France had no intention of sacrificing Prussia, which would have strengthened Austrian domination in Germany, the weakening of which had been France's chief gain in the war.[2] On the other, peace with France had no attraction for Maria Theresa except as the indispensable preliminary to the recovery of Silesia.

While Brühl, Harrach (the Austrian special envoy at Dresden), and Vaulgrenant (the French minister there) were negotiating Saxony was overrun by the Prussians. Brühl had now no option but to accept the Prussian terms. Harrach vainly tried to restrain him by lavish promises of compensation at Prussia's expense, and by assurances that Austria, with the assistance of Russia and Hanover, was bound to crush Prussia in the next campaign. Maria Theresa then decided, chiefly in order to preserve the Saxon alliance, which was essential either for offence or defence against Prussia, and would be useful in restoring the Austro-Russian alliance, that she must make peace with Prussia along with Saxony. The Austro-Saxon alliance was therefore in appearance preserved by the signature of the Treaty of Dresden by both states on 25 December, 1745, but Austria resented the feebleness of Saxon resistance to Prussia, which had forced her to abandon the attractive possibility of peace with France to the exclusion of Prussia for the much less attractive separate peace with Prussia and the confirmation of Prussia's hold on Silesia.

Other causes gravely weakened the cordiality of the Austro-

[1] A. Loss to Brühl, 14 November, 1745, quoted in Becker, 11, n. 1.

[2] " Quelque sujet de mécontentement que le Roi puisse avoir du Roi de Prusse. . . . S.M. ne veut absolument point entendre parler, qu'il soit question de stipulations tendantes de lui enlever la Silésie ou à lui causer d'ailleurs aucun préjudice." (A.E. Saxe, despatch to Vaulgrenant, 22 September, 1745.)

Saxon alliance. Each party blamed the other for the disasters of 1745. Brühl, having failed to deprive Prussia of her gains in the first Silesian war, demanded compensation from Austria for the aggrandisement of Prussia and a reward for his assistance in 1745, while Austria absolutely refused to surrender an inch of territory to Saxony.

Another cause of friction was Maria Theresa's proposal to Saxony of a new treaty of alliance [1] against Prussia, to which Russia and Hanover were to accede. Brühl, in whom fear had temporarily triumphed over hate of Frederick II,[2] rejected the proposal. Economic reconstruction and the restoration of the finances made it essential for Saxony not to run the risk of a new war. Brühl's position, gravely weakened by the disasters of 1745, was threatened by an Opposition party, headed by Count Hennicke, which denounced his anti-Prussian policy; but even had he been willing Brühl could hardly have dared to sign the proposed treaty. Characteristically he softened his refusal by expressing, or at least professing, complete sympathy with the aims of the proposed alliance and offering to join once Russia and Hanover had been secured. Harrach admitted that Brühl had done his best,[3] but Maria Theresa was none the less dissatisfied.

A third cause of friction was the Emperor's efforts to secure the assistance of an imperial army for the Empress-Queen against France. An imperial *Kommissionsdekret*, confidentially communicated to Saxony before publication on 17 January, 1746, summoned the states of the Empire to join in the war against France. The Saxon Privy Council in its refusal plainly showed its resentment of this fresh demand from an ally who had contemptuously ignored Saxony's claims to compensation for previous losses on her behalf.

In spite of these causes of friction with Austria, hatred of

[1] Becker analyses the draft treaty (pp. 42–3) and gives the text in Appendix III.

[2] " Il faut . . . éviter soigneusement ce qui pourrait donner le moindre nouvel ombrage au Roi de Prusse." (Brühl to Ch. Loss, 14 January, 1746.) *Cf.* Carlyle, vii, 3 : " [To Harrach's proposals] Brühl, hardly escaped from the pangs of death and still in a very pale-yellow condition, had answered in effect, ' Hah, say you so ? one's hatred is eternal ; but that man's iron heel ! Wait a little ; get Russia to join in the scheme ! ' and hung back . . . like a famishing dog in sight of a too dangerous leg of mutton. . . . His hatred is fell, but he would fain escape with back unbroken."

[3] Harrach to Ulfeld, 9 February, 1746, quoted in Becker, 51, n. 2.

Prussia remained the guiding motive of Saxon policy after the Treaty of Dresden. The frontal attack on Prussia had failed. Brühl now concentrated on the alternative policy, already tentatively pursued since 1744,[1] of reconciling Austria and France.[2] Recognising the difficulty of the task, he began by an attempt to undermine Prussian influence at Versailles. If the Franco-Prussian alliance could be loosened, Saxony hoped to effect a reconciliation of Austria and France, with herself as mediator, which would afford good prospects of success to the joint Austro-Russo-Saxon-Hanoverian attack upon Prussia. Therefore, in entering into intimate relations with France, Saxony had no intention of breaking off her old alliance with Austria.[3] Nevertheless Austria was suspicious of the new policy, especially in view of the friction between herself and Saxony.

Saxony's *rapprochement* with France had much more serious effects upon Saxon relations with the Maritime Powers. The close co-operation of Britain and Saxony, due to Carteret's policy and culminating after his fall in the Treaty of Warsaw (8 January, 1745),[4] was short-lived. The Pelham ministry drifted rapidly towards an understanding with Prussia, impelled by the growing conviction that the Austro-Saxon generals and forces were incapable of reconquering Silesia. The Convention of Hanover revealed the divergence [5] of Britain and Saxony; and the resulting coldness was intensified by Brühl's resentment at the failure of the Maritime Powers to fulfil the obligation of the

[1] "Notre but est toujours à travailler à un accommodement entre les cours de Versailles, de Londres, de Francfort, de Madrid et de Vienne." (Brühl to A. Loss, 16 September, 1744.) *Cf.* Arneth, iii, 404, n. 2, and *Recueil des Instructions : Autriche* (ed. Sorel), 316.

[2] "Le projet de récupérer la Silésie et de faire rentrer le Roi de Prusse dans ses anciennes limites est prématuré et veut être compassé aux circonstances. La cour de Vienne en précipitant cette entreprise risque de s'embarquer dans de nouveaux dangers. Si l'Imp[ératrice] était bien consultée, elle songerait auparavant à sortir d'affaire avec la France. La guerre entre cette couronne et l'Imp[ératrice] ayant cessé, il y sera plus aisé qu'aujourd'hui d'ouvrir les yeux à la France sur l'aggrandissement du Roi de Prusse et de détacher dans la suite la France des intérêts de ce Prince pour parvenir au but que la cour de Vienne se propose." (A. Loss to Brühl, 22 May, 1746, in Becker, 131–2.)

[3] Saxony was represented at Vienna by the able diplomatist Ch. Loss from 1745 to 1749; on his career see Lippert, clxix–clxxv. His brother, A. Loss, was Saxon minister (later ambassador) at Paris. The two brothers co-operated to effect the reconciliation of Austria and France.

[4] Wenck, ii, 175–6.

[5] Droysen, v, 2, 546; Becker, 59.

Treaty of Warsaw to help in the defence of Saxony against the Prussian invasion, and at their lukewarm support of Saxon interests in the negotiation of the Treaty of Dresden.[1] The growing intimacy of the relations of Britain and Prussia in the early months of 1746[2] naturally increased the coldness between Britain and Saxony, and caused Brühl to suspect that Britain was trying to make peace with France under Prussian mediation.[3] This rivalry of Prussia and Saxony as peacemakers intensified their hostility, but the *rapprochement* of Britain and Prussia increased Brühl's hopes of breaking the Franco-Prussian alliance. When the Maritime Powers, on 19 January, 1746, claimed the 10,000 troops promised by the sixth article of the Treaty of Warsaw on payment of £90,000, Brühl attached to his acceptance conditions which he knew were unacceptable to the Maritime Powers. These exorbitant demands, put forward when Brühl was openly declaring that Saxony absolutely required subsidies,[4] prove that he had already decided to drive a bargain with France.

Apart from his great project for reconciling Austria and France, Brühl had excellent reasons for preferring France to the Maritime Powers. He believed—as the event proved, correctly—that France would be a more generous paymaster and would not require the despatch of a Saxon contingent. The Maritime Powers would only pay him for fighting, since a Saxon attack on Austria was inconceivable: France would pay him to remain neutral. The Saxon army was in great need of a period of quiet for reorganisation after the disasters of 1745. It is characteristic of Brühl's methods[5] that, although he had already decided in favour of France, he continued the negotiations with the Maritime Powers until the day on which ratifications of the Franco-Saxon treaty of subsidy were exchanged, partly as a means of extorting better terms from France, partly to conceal as long as possible his desertion of the Maritime Powers so

[1] Droysen, v, 3, 243, n. 1 ; *Geheimnisse*, i, 107.

[2] See Flemming's despatches from London in *Geheimnisse* and Becker, 60–1 ; cf. *Pol. Corr.*, v, 15.

[3] Becker, 60.

[4] " La Saxe avoue qu'elle ne peut pas se passer de subsides." (Vaulgrenant to Argenson, 25 January, 1746 (A.E. Saxe, 34, f. 46).)

[5] " Il est de la prudence d'avoir plusieurs cordes à son arc." (Brühl to Ch. Loss, 30 December, 1746, in Becker, 112, n. 2.)

as to have an alternative if his negotiation with France broke down.

On 4 February, 1746, Brühl opened negotiations at Dresden for a subsidy from France and Spain.[1] Argenson, the French Foreign Minister, welcomed the overture. The defection of Bavaria and Prussia excluded France from Germany and drove her back upon the defensive. "The military superiority of France in Germany was lost, and could only be restored by negotiations—*i.e.*, by money."[2] Austria, no longer engaged on a double war, was free to turn her whole strength against France. Argenson remembered that the invasion of Alsace had followed Prussia's previous desertion in 1742. He feared that the release of Austrian troops employed against Prussia would have similar results in 1746, and was therefore eager to secure Saxon neutrality, especially as Saxony held the balance in the Diet of the Empire. France had already purchased the neutrality of the Palatinate, Trier, and Cologne, while Prussian assistance was practically certain. The purchase of Saxony would assure to France not only Saxon neutrality, but the neutrality of the Empire. Further, the winning of Saxony-Poland was essential to the success of Argenson's great "Northern system," because it would link up Prussia and Sweden, France's clients in the north, with Turkey, and provide the pivot of a great coalition which would hold Russia and Austria in check.

Yet in spite of the eagerness of both parties a deadlock was reached between France and Saxony early in March, chiefly on two points: (1) Brühl demanded four times more by way of subsidy than France would offer. (2) Was Saxony to be bound to neutrality only in regard to the war in the Netherlands? Or was she to exert herself to prevent the Empire going to war with France? And if the Empire, despite Saxony's exertions, declared war on France was Saxony still to be bound to neutrality? But, after all, Brühl's adroit use of the offers of the Maritime Powers, and the intervention of Maurice de Saxe,[3] natural half-brother of Augustus III and a Marshal of France, whose victories in the Netherlands gave him great influence at the French court,

[1] Vaulgrenant's despatch of 4 February, 1746 (A.E. Saxe, 34, f. 94); *Geheimnisse*, i, 107, wrongly attributes the initiative to France.
[2] Argenson; quoted in Zévort, *Le Marquis d'Argenson*, 123.
[3] A.E. Saxe, 34, ff. 163, 198.

secured a compromise favourable to Saxony, in spite of the opposition of Argenson, who believed that more could be gained from Saxony in exchange for a smaller subsidy.[1]

The Franco-Saxon secret treaty of neutrality and subsidy was signed on 21 April, 1746.[2] France (Art. II) accepted Saxon mediation to secure peace on terms to be concerted by France and Saxony. She (Art. III) agreed that the treaty was not to interfere with the obligations of the King of Poland as a member of the Empire, nor to modify the existing alliances of Poland unless they were expressly contrary to the Franco-Saxon treaty. She (Art. VI) expressly recognised the duty of the King of Poland to send his contingent to the imperial army if the Empire declared war on France, and agreed that this should not prevent her paying the subsidy of two million livres per annum for three years (Art. VII). France also promised (Art. IX) to use her good offices to procure a Spanish subsidy for Saxony, and a preliminary Spanish-Saxon convention was actually concluded on 13 May,[3] but was never ratified. Finally, she promised (Art. XIII) to assist Saxony, if attacked in consequence of the treaty, with all her forces until Saxony received full compensation. In exchange for these valuable advantages Saxony merely promised neutrality in the war outside of Germany (Art. IV), and agreed (Art. V) not to enter into any alliances contrary to the treaty of friendship, or which might disturb the peace of Europe—a promise so vague as to be almost worthless.[4] France, in fact, was paying Saxony to pursue the policy she would have followed in any case.

The first result of the conclusion of the treaty was to intensify the coldness between Saxony and the Maritime Powers. Brühl tried to keep the treaty secret, partly in order to preserve the appearance of impartiality necessary in a would-be mediator between the belligerents. But the terms of the treaty were known in London before 10 May, and the British ministry bluntly rejected the Saxon offer of mediation between France and Britain. British ministers wrongly regarded the Franco-

[1] Argenson, iii, 135.
[2] Text in Becker, Appendix V.
[3] Farges, ii, 93–5.
[4] "Par notre traité de subsides le Roi de Pologne ne promettait rien de positif. Il s'y réservait même la liberté d'obéir aux résolutions de la diète de Ratisbonne." (Argenson, iii, 136–7.)

Saxon treaty as the accession of Saxony to the Franco-Prussian alliance. Brühl, on the contrary, wrote to his confidant A. Loss, the Saxon minister at the French court: "We should do wrong to tie our hands and offend our old friends for the scanty subsidies which France offers us."[1] There was, indeed, a momentary coldness between Dresden and the two imperial courts, especially Petersburg,[2] but this was removed by the Saxon communication of the treaty. Brühl emphasised its harmless character, pointed to Article III, which expressly reserved Saxony's obligations as a member of the Empire and of the Austro-Russian alliance, and succeeded in maintaining unaltered his understanding with the imperial courts. He was even able to represent his refusal to send troops to the assistance of the Maritime Powers as a service to Russia, since he thus forced the Maritime Powers to begin negotiations for a corps of Russian auxiliary troops.

It was soon apparent that the difficulties which had appeared in the Franco-Saxon negotiations had not been removed by the conclusion of the treaty, which had been signed by France and Saxony with radically divergent ideas of the use to be made of it. Argenson desired [3] to break the Austro-Saxon alliance, and to reconcile Saxony with Prussia under the auspices of France [4] in order to check Austrian influence in the Empire. Brühl's aim was not to join the Franco-Prussian alliance, but to win the adhesion of France to the anti-Prussian coalition. His first step after the conclusion of the subsidy treaty was to urge France to resume her negotiations for peace with Austria [5] under Saxon mediation. Argenson disbelieved in the sincerity of Austria, and accepted Brühl's mediation only in order to confirm Saxony in her neutrality—a necessary quality in a would-be mediator—and thus lessen the intimacy of Austro-Saxon relations.[6]

[1] Becker, 109, n. 4 (translated).
[2] *Geheimnisse*, i, 118–23; Vitzthum, 89 n.
[3] See his instructions to Issarts, the ambassador-designate at Dresden, dated 31 July, 1746, in Farges, ii, 64 ff.
[4] Farges, ii, 78–9.
[5] "La négociation de notre traité avec la France étant heureusement terminée, la matière principale sur laquelle j'aurai à m'entretenir dorénavant avec V. E. sera celle d'un accommodement à moyenner entre les cours de France et de Vienne." (Brühl to A. Loss, 9 May, 1746, in Becker, Appendix VII.)
[6] Farges, ii, 97.

France on her side made little progress towards separating Saxony-Poland from Austria and Russia. Argenson realised clearly that Brühl could not surrender without an equivalent the Austro-Russian alliance, which alone enabled Saxony to maintain a precarious hold upon Poland. France and Prussia must abandon their traditional policy of opposition to the house of Wettin in Poland, which merely drove the Saxon kings into closer dependence on Russia and Austria, and support the King of Poland so energetically that he could dispense with Austro-Russian support.[1] Argenson had already taken during the negotiation of the subsidy treaty his first step in this direction by offering to support the Saxon candidate for the Polish throne on the death of Augustus III.

But France was powerless in Poland unless supported by Prussia. Hence the Prusso-Saxon alliance was in Argenson's view essential not merely to weaken Austrian influence in the Empire, but to free Saxony from dependence on the imperial courts in Poland, and to make Saxony-Poland the fixed pivot of his "Northern system." Since the Treaty of Dresden Frederick II had vainly attempted to win the friendship of Saxony,[2] and Argenson fully appreciated the difficulties which stood in the way.[3] The main stumbling-block was Saxony's inveterate jealousy of Prussia and her desire to avenge the humiliations of 1745. Brühl and Frederick II were personal enemies,[4] and, as long as Brühl saw the slightest possibility of reconciling Austria and France, he was determined to reject all Prussian proposals of alliance.[5] Frederick II on his side was not prepared to pay dearly for an alliance with Saxony, and Argenson had good reason [6] to doubt his readiness to support the election of one of Augustus III's sons to the Polish throne.

The alliance therefore speedily proved rather disappointing to both parties,[7] but both cherished hopes that their ultimate object might still be realised, and eagerly seized an opportunity

[1] Farges, ii, 82–3, 88.
[2] Farges, ii, 84 ; *Pol. Corr.*, v, *passim.*
[3] Farges, ii, 83–6.
[4] *Mémoires de Frédéric II*, i, 399–400.
[5] Farges, ii, 86–7.
[6] "Nous n'entrerons dans aucune liaison avec [le Roi de Prusse] tant que nous pourrons espérer d'effectuer un accommodement entre les maisons de Bourbon et d'Autriche." (Brühl to A. Loss, 21 April, 1746, in Becker, Appendix VI.)
[7] Farges, ii, 78–9.

to turn a limited political understanding into a family compact. On 27 July, 1746, Maria Theresa, daughter of Philip V of Spain and wife of the Dauphin, died without male issue. Louis XV and his intimates were bent on securing the succession to the throne as soon as possible.[1] From this point of view a daughter of Augustus III, one of a family of fourteen and a granddaughter of Augustus 'the Strong,' was an excellent candidate for the hand of the Dauphin. Physiological arguments were backed by political reasons.[2] France hoped by the marriage to complete the work begun by the treaty of subsidies, and insisted that a good understanding between Prussia and Saxony was essential, but hinted that in the meantime some show of friendly relations would be sufficient.[3]

Augustus III was dazzled by the prospect of a brilliant marriage for one of his daughters. Brühl believed that the marriage would guarantee French support of the Saxon house in Poland, and would raise Saxon influence at Versailles at the expense of Prussia,[4] and thus enable Saxony to pursue her fundamental aims without offending her old allies. Saxony readily accepted the few political stipulations made by France, which included the maintenance of friendly relations with Prussia and the exertion of Saxon influence to preserve the neutrality of Russia and of the Empire towards France. On 25 December, 1746, the Duc de Richelieu, one of Louis XV's intimates, arrived at Dresden to represent the King of France at the preliminary ceremonies, and to conduct Maria Josepha, the selected daughter of Augustus III, to Versailles, where the marriage was celebrated on 9 February, 1747. But although the marriage undoubtedly

[1] " Tout ce que je souhaite à M. le Dauphin c'est une Princesse aimable, saine de corps et d'esprit, et qui puisse donner à la France un bon nombre d'enfants mâles, robustes et bien conditionnés." (Noailles to Louis XV, in Rousset, *Correspondance de Louis XV et du maréchal de Noailles*, ii, 241.)

[2] Maurice de Saxe to Augustus III, 12 October, 1746, in Vitzthum, 50–1.

[3] Maurice de Saxe to Augustus III, 27 October, 1746, in Vitzthum, 63–5.

[4] Brühl never abated his campaign against Prussia at Versailles. In a letter to Saxe of 8 November, 1746, he makes an interesting forecast of the Diplomatic Revolution (printed in Vitzthum, 89–90): " Le Roi de Prusse pourrait fort bien, après que la France se serait de plus en plus épuisée, lui jouer un nouveau tour, plus sanglant encore que les précédents . . . en se tournant tout-à-fait du côté des puissances maritimes et de leur alliés ; par où la France se trouverait fort embarrassée de sa situation, pendant que le Roi de Prusse obtiendrait par là, la plus forte garantie pour la Silésie et peut-être encore d'autres nouveaux avantages."

increased the intimacy of Franco-Saxon relations, it did nothing to remove the fundamental divergence of French and Saxon policy. Brühl continued before and after the marriage to press France to inform Saxony, in confidence, of the terms on which she would make peace with Austria.[1] He believed [2] that Argenson, the Prussophil [3] Foreign Minister, was the chief obstacle to a Franco-Austrian *rapprochement*, and urged Saxe to procure his dismissal. The exertions of the Saxon party at Versailles secured secret instructions to Richelieu to request Saxony's mediation between France and Austria. Brühl once again pressed France for her ultimatum, which he would communicate to Vienna as his own idea of peace terms. When Argenson objected to negotiations taking place at Dresden, he was dismissed, on 10 January, 1747.[4] Saxe boasted [5] that Argenson's successor, Puysieulx, was his friend, and was inclined to abandon the tradition of hostility to Austria resolutely upheld by his predecessor. The indirect negotiations with Vienna through Dresden were, however, concealed from the new minister and entrusted by the King to Saxe and Richelieu, who had been completely won over by Brühl.[6] Ch. Loss, who represented Saxony at the Austrian court, believed that if Vienna sincerely desired peace Saxon mediation would at last be crowned with success.[7] Saul, Brühl's *âme damnée*, was despatched to discuss the French offer with the Empress-Queen and her ministers, and discovered that the fourth of the seven points of the French offer [8] was quite unacceptable to them. Saxon hopes were dashed, and, although negotiations continued, they had no real chance of success, and practically ended after the opening in August of direct Franco-

[1] Brühl to Maurice de Saxe, 8 and 16 November, 1746, in Vitzthum, 89 and 93.

[2] Vitzthum, 93.

[3] Argenson, iii, 92, etc.; Vitzthum, 130, etc.

[4] See, on the intrigues leading to Argenson's dismissal, Rousset, ii, 252–76.

[5] Maurice de Saxe to Brühl, 12 February, 1747, in Vitzthum, 165. He might have been less satisfied with the new minister had he heard his "friend" say to Chambrier at one of their first interviews, "Prussia's interests are ours," and then promise to do everything in his power to secure Prussia in possession of Silesia at the general peace (Droysen, v, Part 3, 300).

[6] See his letters to Brühl in Vitzthum, 252–4; cf. *Pol. Corr.*, v, 343.

[7] Vitzthum, 151.

[8] Printed in *Geheimnisse*, i, 143. The fourth point demanded "an establishment for Don Philip either in Italy or the Netherlands at the option of the court of Vienna." This was the point which lay nearest to Louis XV's heart, because Don Philip had married his favourite daughter.

British peace negotiations between Marshal Saxe and General Ligonier, which were later continued by Sandwich and Saint-Séverin.

While Saxony was trying to undermine Prussian influence at Versailles and to reconcile France and Austria, France was exerting all her newly acquired influence at Dresden to promote the alliance of Prussia and Saxony. Throughout 1746 Frederick II remained genuinely desirous of a defensive alliance with Saxony [1]—an invaluable bulwark against Austrian hostility. But by the beginning of 1747 he was convinced that so long as Brühl remained in control of Saxon policy the proposed alliance was impracticable.[2] When, therefore, during his stay at Dresden, Richelieu made a fresh attempt to conclude the Prusso-Saxon alliance he got little assistance either from Prussia or Saxony. Brühl fully justified Frederick II's suspicions. He dared not openly reject the Prussian proposals supported by France and the Opposition party under Hennicke at Dresden; [3] so he intimated that, under existing treaties between Russia and Saxony, Russia's consent was necessary to the conclusion of any new treaty of alliance.[4] Frederick's resentment was increased by Saxon intrigues against Prussia at Versailles and by Saxon mediation between France and Austria.[5] Gentle measures having failed to win the friendship of Saxony, Frederick began to apply relentless pressure [6] for the payment of Saxon debts to the King of Prussia and his subjects, which soon reduced Brühl to desperation and Saxony to bankruptcy. He began also a counter-offensive to Brühl's intrigues at Versailles, and lost no opportunity of impressing upon the French ministers the duplicity of his rival.[7] Henceforth the rivalry of Prussia and Saxony was intensified by unscrupulous competition for the favour of France, which was forced to recognise the impossibility of reconciling her two German clients.

[1] Instructions to Klingräffen in *Pol. Corr.*, v, 12–20, dated 30 January, 1746, and later despatches (especially *ibid.*, 283–7).

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 297, 310.

[3] *Ibid.*, 329.

[4] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 332. Russia would of course give the answer Brühl desired; *ibid.*, 334.

[5] He was fully informed of this secret negotiation and predicted its failure. "Tandis que la cour de Dresde négociera la paix avec la France et Vienne, je n'en serai point embarrassé, parce que je suis sûr que cela ne produira rien." (*Pol. Corr.*, v, 393.)

[6] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 363–5.

[7] *Ibid.*, 300, 356.

French dissatisfaction with Saxony was increased by the continuance of close relations between Saxony and the two imperial courts. The outstanding diplomatic event of 1746 had been the conclusion of the Treaty of the Two Empresses, due mainly to the final victory of the Austrian over the French party at the Russian court [1] and to Frederick II's invasion of Saxony, which Russia regarded as a client state, in 1745. The treaty [2] marked the restoration and strengthening of the Austro-Russian alliance of 1726, which had been broken off by the alleged Botta conspiracy. The articles of the main treaty established [3] a close defensive alliance between Austria and Russia, to which Saxony-Poland and Hanover were to be invited to accede. Five separate and secret articles were attached to the treaty, the second of which regulated Austrian assistance if Sweden attacked Russia, and Russian assistance if Austria were attacked by France after the conclusion of the Austrian succession war, which was expressly excluded from the *casus fœderis*.

The fourth separate and secret article gave the alliance practically an offensive character against Prussia. It is true that Austria and Russia expressly declared their intention of maintaining the Treaty of Dresden. But if the King of Prussia violated the treaty and attacked the Empress-Queen or the Tsaritsa or the republic of Poland, then Maria Theresa's rights to Silesia and Glatz were to be fully restored and included in the formal Russian guarantee of the Habsburg dominions. Moreover, to avert the common danger of such an attack, the contracting parties promised to take counsel together, to communicate confidentially to each other everything which they could discover concerning hostile views or projects against either party, and to hold in readiness near their frontiers, in Bohemia and Moravia and Livland and Estonia respectively, a corps of 30,000 men each, in order to give the stipulated assistance more quickly and effectively in the event of a Prussian attack against either party. Further, since 60,000 men would not be sufficient in such an event to repulse the attack, recover Silesia and Glatz, and to assure the general tranquillity for the

[1] Solovev, *History of Russia*, xxii, 48 ff.
[2] Printed in Martens, i, 147–78.
[3] On the restoration of good relations between Austria and Russia see *Archives Voronzov*, vi, *passim*.

future, the contracting parties agreed to provide 60,000 men each, and to bring that number of troops as far as practicable into the border provinces. After making more detailed provision for the joint military operations in the event of a Prussian attack, the Tsaritsa declared that she would not retain any conquest she might make, and the Empress-Queen promised to pay, within a year after the recovery by Austria of Silesia and Glatz, two million Rhenish florins to the Tsaritsa in return for her assistance.

A great step had been taken to build up the anti-Prussian coalition for which Maria Theresa had schemed ever since the Treaty of Breslau. Saxon accession was vital to the success of the alliance. Saxony would help to shield Austrian territory from Prussian attack and would be invaluable for an offensive in Silesia, while Poland would give Russia free access to Central Europe across the plains of the Vistula, and assure the predominant influence of the Austro-Russian allies in Germany.[1] Saxony had refused to join openly the anti-Prussian coalition in January and February 1746,[2] but the two imperial courts did not take this refusal seriously, and in March 1747 formally invited Saxony to accede to the Treaty of the Two Empresses. Brühl referred the proposal to the Saxon Privy Council, which gave its opinion [3] on 15 April. The existing treaties with Austria and Russia were sufficient from the Saxon point of view. To enter into new engagements would arouse the suspicions of France, and might lead to the stoppage of subsidies and the loss of French support for Saxon claims at the general peace. The Privy Council was especially alarmed by the fourth secret article. If Frederick II discovered its contents and learned that Saxony had acceded to it he might prefer *prævenire* rather than *præveniri*, and would then attack and ruin Saxony—an interesting anticipation of 1756. They therefore suggested that the negotiation ought to be spun out as much as possible, and raised a number of objections which could be used to delay matters. Brühl was in complete agreement with these conclusions,[4] and

[1] Broglie, *Maurice de Saxe et le Marquis d'Argenson*, i, 303–4.
[2] *Supra*, p. 20.
[3] Extracts printed in *Geheimnisse*, i, 149–60.
[4] See his despatch to Vitzthum (Saxon minister at Petersburg) in *Geheimnisse*, i, 147–8, dated 31 March, 1747.

on 23 May sent full powers to the Saxon ministers at Petersburg, with instructions to take everything *ad referendum*.

Puysieulx at once declared that Saxon accession to the Treaty of the Two Empresses would mean a breach with France, and hinted at the withdrawal of subsidies.[1] Brühl in reply sent a copy of the treaty (but without the secret articles) to Versailles to prove that it in no way affected Saxony's relations with France. If Saxony refused to negotiate, a complete rupture would follow between her and the imperial courts, which would destroy all possibility of success in the mediation of peace which she had undertaken in the interest of France. With this answer and a formal declaration that the secret articles contained nothing more with reference to the interests of France than the main treaty the French Government professed itself satisfied. Henceforth Brühl was in a position of unstable equilibrium between his old allies and his new paymaster. Every act of complaisance towards the one would provoke an indignant chorus of protest from the other. Brühl knew only too well that he was in danger of falling between the two stools. All his genuine ability in diplomacy and his unblushing mendacity would be required to maintain his footing in both camps until he could secure his object—the creation of a great coalition for the partition of Prussia with the connivance of France. The difficulty of his task was increased by the arrival at Dresden of an energetic but inexperienced minister from the King of Great Britain —Sir Charles Hanbury Williams.

[1] A. Loss to Brühl, 3 May, 1747, in *Geheimnisse*, i, 163.

CHAPTER III

APPRENTICESHIP OF WILLIAMS AT DRESDEN (1747–9)

Objects of Williams's mission to Dresden—The Saxon court—Augustus III—Brühl and his assistants—The diplomatic corps at Dresden—Williams's *début*—Prolongation of the Franco-Saxon treaty of subsidy—March of the Russian troops through Poland—Saxony continues her mediation between France and Austria—Departure of the Saxon court from Dresden for Warsaw—Williams remains at Dresden—Continued hostility of Saxony and Prussia—Their rivalry for the favour of France—Prussian claims upon the *Steuer* under the Treaty of Dresden (1745)—Changes in the diplomatic corps at Dresden—Austro-Saxon relations—Williams appointed to Berlin—Marshal Saxe's visit to Dresden—Williams returns to England—He proposes to secure the peace of Europe by electing a King of the Romans—Growing intimacy of Williams and Newcastle.

It is on this Romish-King and other the like chimerical errands, that witty Hanbury, then a much more admirable man than we now find him, is prowling about in the German courts, off and on, for some ten years in all, six of them still to come. A sharp-eyed man, of shrewish quality ; given to intriguing, to spying, to bribing ; anxious to win his Diplomatic game by every method, though the stake (as here) is oftenest zero ; with fatal proclivity to Scandal, and what in London circles he has heard called Wit. Little or nothing of real laughter in the soul of him, at any time ; only a laboured continual grin, always of malicious nature, and much trouble and jerking about, to keep that up. Had evidently some modicum of real intellect, of capacity for being wise ; but now has fatally devoted it nearly all to being witty, on these poor terms ! A perverse, barren, spiteful little wretch ; the grin of him generally an affliction at this date.

CARLYLE, *Frederick the Great*, Book XVI, chapter v

THE post of envoy at Dresden was of the second rank; but, owing to the competition of the rival leagues for the Saxon alliance in the Austrian succession war, it was for a time during Villiers's tenure of the office of first-rate importance. The Treaty of Dresden, by ending the war in Germany, had restored more normal conditions; and when Chesterfield, the Secretary of State for the Northern Department, told Andrié, the Prussian secretary at London, that the appointment of Williams was entirely due to personal considerations,[1] he did not deviate very far from the paths of truth, since the British Government attached no great importance to the mission.[2]

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 304, 351.

[2] Chesterfield to Williams, 13 January, 1747, O.S., in Newport Papers :

British ministers, however, were alarmed at the diplomatic successes of France in 1746. France had renewed her defensive alliance with Denmark, had overthrown the dominant Anglo-Russian party at Stockholm, and had considerably strengthened her position in Germany. Britain feared that the marriage of the Dauphin with Maria Josepha would complete the transference of Saxony to the French camp, and give France a decided superiority in the Empire. The chief object of Williams's mission was therefore to assist the two imperial ministers at Dresden in holding Saxony to the Anglo-Austrian alliance.

The restoration of cordial relations between Britain and Saxony was desirable also in view of the military successes of France in 1746 in the Netherlands, which proved that the inferiority of the allied troops, even after the end of the Jacobite rebellion and the second Silesian war, could only be remedied by securing a large corps of auxiliaries. The employment of Russian troops was a probability, and they would have to march across Poland. The restoration of cordial relations between Britain and Saxony, which had been impaired by the British *rapprochement* with Prussia and Saxony's intimacy with France, would greatly facilitate the march of the Russian auxiliaries to the Netherlands.

Williams left England on 24 April, 1747,[1] travelled through Holland and Westphalia,[2] and arrived at Dresden on 20 May. The extravagance and elaborate ceremonial of the lesser German courts in the eighteenth century has attracted the notice both of contemporaries [3] and of historians. The court of Dresden under Augustus II (as King of Poland) and III (as Elector of Saxony) was perhaps the most brilliant of all. Saxony was already on the verge of bankruptcy,[4] but the expenses of the court were the last thing Augustus III and his minister-favourite thought of curtailing. A good father, a connoisseur and patron of art and literature, and a mighty hunter, Augustus III

" Everything shall be ready if you come ever so soon [to London] and everything may wait without the least disadvantage if you should think it necessary to stay some time longer in the country."

[1] All dates in the text are N.S.

[2] Add. MSS. 34731, f. 63.

[3] Newcastle was greatly impressed by the " truly royal " court of Hanover (Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, i, 429). *Cf.* Williams to Dayrolle, in Add. MSS. 15869, f. 137.

[4] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 388.

throughout his reign showed little interest in, and less aptitude for, the art of government. He was content to pursue his private interests and pleasures, and left the task of government in the hands of his favourite. Brühl had succeeded to the post of minister-favourite in 1738 on the fall of Sulkowsky—Augustus III's first favourite.[1] Henceforth he exercised almost unlimited power in Saxony until the death of his master twenty-five years later. The security of his position was increased by his conversion to Roman Catholicism. The combination of the functions of minister and favourite was not the least of the resultant evils. To retain his hold on Augustus III Brühl had to devote most of his time to keeping his royal master amused, and the work of government could not be efficiently performed in his spare time.

Count Brühl's "attendance at court and other occupations," successive British envoys complained,

> scarce allow him an hour in a day for business. The only time to catch him is of an evening as he runs through his assembly room to get to his card-table, and he takes it very ill if you stop him without having something particular to say.[2]

Brühl lacked not only time but capacity for statesmanship, although he showed some ability as a diplomatist. In the fiscal and financial sphere he reduced the flourishing electorate of Saxony to economic ruin by the imposition of an enormous and badly adjusted burden of taxation, the proceeds of which were expended in the gratification of the luxurious tastes of the King and his family and in the purchase of estates for himself and his relations.[3] Under Brühl even the administration of justice was a means of extortion and became hopelessly corrupt.[4] Second in influence to Brühl alone, and working in close co-operation with him, was Guarini, the King's confessor and a consistent Francophil.[5] Saul, Brühl's confidential secretary, who shared the secrets of his chief and frequently acted as the intermediary between Brühl and the diplomatic corps, was

[1] Böttiger, ii, 412.
[2] Stormont to Newcastle, in Add. MSS. 32866, f. 24. *Cf.* Williams to Newcastle, 13 September, N.S., 1751.
[3] Böttiger, ii, 440–8; *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 413, 420–1.
[4] Böttiger, ii, 446–7.
[5] A. E. Saxe, 34, f. 152: Durand's despatch of 14 March.

an advocate of the Anglo-Imperial alliance. The routine work of internal administration was delegated by Brühl to Count Hennicke,[1] the leading member of the Saxon Privy Council, who, unlike Guarini and Saul, sometimes opposed the Prime Minister and was regarded as a rival rather than as an assistant.

The leading member of the diplomatic corps at Dresden was Count Michael Bestuzhev, brother of the Russian Great Chancellor. This relationship strengthened the customarily predominant authority of the Russian minister at Dresden. As in the case of many other Russian ministers, Bestuzhev's great aim at this time was to avoid returning to Russia.[2] He therefore did his best to keep on good terms with Brühl, even at the price of occasionally disobeying his instructions. Bestuzhev's rival at Dresden was the French ambassador, the Marquis des Issarts,[3] who was still in his twenties, and owed his appointment to the favour of the Prince de Conti and the good opinion of Argenson.[4] The Austrian minister, Count Esterhazy, was only a few years older than Issarts, but had already resided five years at Dresden. Although disliked there,[5] he was a capable and energetic minister,[6] but left Dresden very soon after Williams's arrival as the result of one of those squabbles over precedence which are so common in eighteenth-century diplomatic history. Joachim Wilhelm von Klingräffen, the Prussian minister, and one of the ablest of Frederick II's diplomatists, was preparing to leave Dresden to avoid the expense of the Electoral Prince's wedding.[7] The Papal nuncio, the Spanish, Sardinian, and

[1] Adelung's *Life of Count Brühl* (Eng. transl.), 60 *et seq.*

[2] Bestuzhev had an additional reason for remaining at Dresden, as he wished to marry "a [Saxon] widow with a pretty good fortune whose name is Haugwitz," although his first wife was still alive in Siberia. (Laurence to Chesterfield, 15 November, 1747, S.P.F., Prussia.)

[3] Farges, ii, 63 ff. *Cf.* Williams's letter of 30 May, N.S., 1747, in S.P.F., Poland: "The French ambassador is very little of a Frenchman, for he is fat and his wig is uncombed and he has nothing unnatural or affected about him."

[4] *Mémoires*, iii, 137.

[5] Lippert, cxxxviii; Vehse, viii, 88–93; *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 41.

[6] Keene to Newcastle, 25 July, 1752 (private), in Add. MSS. 32838, f. 302: "In a word Esterhazy is a worthy good-natured gentleman. . . . His inclinations are good towards the common cause. No *tracassier*—you will do no great stroke with him—he will keep close to his instructions—will be sometimes a little unintelligible to your Grace and I will not answer for him that he always understands himself."

[7] Williams to Chesterfield, 30 May, 1747; *Pol. Corr.*, v, 376, 388.

Neapolitan ministers, and representatives of the lesser German courts completed the diplomatic corps at Dresden.[1]

Within a few weeks of his arrival at Dresden Williams had given clear proof of his main weaknesses—inability to hold his tongue and a tendency to rash action. Apparently he failed to realise that his every utterance would be regarded as ministerial, reported by other ministers to their courts, and carefully scrutinised as an indication of British policy. Williams's close connection with Fox and his proneness to boast of it, although Fox had at this time no influence on British foreign policy, made caution in airing his views doubly necessary. Yet we find him expressing the opinion that it was impossible for Maria Theresa to be popular in England, condemning the overbearing manners of the Austrian ministers, and denouncing the ingratitude and selfishness of the Austrian sovereign and ministers.[2] These opinions of Britain's ally would doubtless have been received with applause in the House of Commons, but it was extremely foolish for a British envoy at a court where his chief business was to support the Austrian minister to give public expression to them. More important results followed from his casual suggestion, made in ignorance of the Franco-Saxon treaty of neutrality, that the Dutch might hire 10,000 Saxon troops in order to take Saxony out of the hands of France and at the same time strengthen the allies in the Netherlands.[3] The ever-watchful Prussian minister reported to his master that Williams had proposed a subsidy treaty to Saxony, and Frederick at once passed on "the news" to the French Government in order to discredit Brühl.[4] The result was a coldness between Brühl and the French ambassador, who did not believe Brühl's protestations that the story had no foundation in fact. Williams then showed another weak spot in his diplomatic armour—a belief that petty intrigue was the surest road to success in diplomacy—by trying to increase this coldness.[5] In the event it was neither Frederick II nor Williams who profited, but Count Brühl, whose ostentatious cordiality towards the British envoy

[1] Calkoen, the Dutch minister since 1744, had been recalled to go as ambassador to Paris, but finally returned to his old post. On him see *Archives*, i, 28, etc.; *Pol. Corr.*, v, 401, 481, etc.; Becker, 109.

[2] Droysen, v, Part 3, 364.

[3] Williams to Chesterfield, 28 June.

[4] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 412–3.

[5] Williams to Chesterfield, 2 August.

was probably assumed to alarm France. Brühl was successful in securing the prolongation [1] of his subsidy treaty with France for two additional years in exchange for the renewal of his promise to preserve the neutrality of the Empire.[2] Brühl refused to promise not to accede to the Treaty of the Two Empresses, but agreed at least to postpone his accession.[3] Rumours of the conclusion of the treaty reached Dresden, and Williams secured Father Guarini's admission that they were correct, although the French ambassador was still roundly denying the existence of the treaty.[4] Brühl had then no option but to tell the truth, and explained to Williams that he had asked France to prolong the treaty in order to be certain of receiving subsidies, even if a general peace should be concluded. Williams had fancied that his intimacy with the King and Brühl would soon bring Saxony back to the old system,[5] and was deeply chagrined by the conclusion of the treaty. "I am afraid," he wrote to Chesterfield,[6] "I shall be able to do very little service to His Majesty for the future, this court having now completed their scheme of politics, which is to sit with their arms before them and take money from the first bidder." Williams's resentment was increased [7] when he learned that Saxony was trying to arrange a separate peace between Austria and France. He was now finally cured of any belief he may have had in his ability to sway the court of Dresden by his personal influence. Henceforth he insists that Russian influence alone can move the Saxon court.

Williams soon discovered that his business at Dresden was small in amount and unimportant in character. He spent the greater part of his time in the summer and autumn of 1747 in trying to secure the restoration of normal diplomatic relations between Saxony and Austria,[8] and in reporting to his home

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 468 ; *Geheimnisse*, i, 190–1 ; Böttiger, ii, 451.

[2] *Cf.* memorandum in A. E. Saxe, Supplément 2, f. 150 : "L'électeur de Saxe tant en sa qualité de Roi qu'en celle d'électeur ne peut être d'aucune utilité pour les affaires de la France. . . . Tout le service que ce Pce auroit pu rendre à la France eut été de lui engager ses voix dans les collèges de l'empire pour s'opposer à la declaron d'une guerre générale du Corps Germque contre cette Puissance et ce service étoit l'objet naturel d'un Traité de subsides."

[3] Droysen, v, Part 3, 370 n.

[4] Williams to Chesterfield, 27 September ; *Pol. Corr.*, v, 517.

[5] Williams to Robinson, 30 July and 3 September, 1747, in Add. MSS. 23825, f. 276, and 23826, f. 3.

[6] 30 September.

[7] Droysen, v, Part 3, 364, 394 n.

[8] See his correspondence with Robinson in Add. MSS. 23825 and 23826.

Government on the designs of the King of Prussia. These reports were from the beginning strongly biased against Frederick II, and indicate that Williams, in spite of his dissatisfaction with the conduct of Austria, was a stout advocate of the Austrian alliance.

Rather more of his time was occupied in trying to secure repayment of a private loan [1] made by George II to Saxony in 1744. Frederick II hoped by egging Williams on to create a breach between Britain and Saxony.[2] Klingräffen was also instructed to use the common interests of Hanover and Prussia in the Saxon finances to worm his way into Williams's confidence in the hope of securing 'indiscretions.' Neither plan succeeded, because Williams, although a novice in diplomacy, was an old hand at its less reputable sister—backstairs intrigue—and had had experience already of the use a Prussian minister would make of his conversation. A Hanoverian minister, Baron Wedel, was soon sent to Dresden, and Klingräffen transferred his attentions to the new arrival.[3]

The conclusion at Petersburg on 19 November of a convention [4] for the employment of 30,000 Russian troops in the West gave Williams his first important negotiation at Dresden. Article II of the convention bound the Maritime Powers to secure a free passage for the troops through Poland and the Empire. On 19 December at the request [5] of the British ambassador at Petersburg, Lord Hyndford, Chesterfield instructed Williams "to make requisition in form as well to the King as to the Republic of Poland" for the passage of the troops. For this purpose Williams had to be specially accredited to Augustus II as King of Poland and also to the Republic of Poland, and the adjustment of the terms of his credential and requisitorial letters in accordance with precedents was a matter of some difficulty. This incident illustrates the difficulty of working the personal union of Saxony and Poland—two states of diametrically opposed character and with partially divergent

[1] Williams to Robinson, 20 October, in Add. MSS. 23826, f. 112. This being a purely Hanoverian matter, though transacted by a British minister, there are no papers referring to it in the P.R.O.
[2] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 496–7, 499.
[3] *Ibid.*, vi, 28.
[4] Martens, ix (x), 147–65.
[5] Hyndford to Chesterfield, 7 November, O.S., in Add. MSS. 18384, f. 330.

interests. Williams had already sounded Saul,[1] and after receiving news from Hyndford of the conclusion of the convention,[2] he approached Brühl. Brühl replied unofficially that the King of Poland would do nothing to hinder the march of the troops, but dared not openly facilitate it, since this would be considered by France as an unfriendly act and would give Prussia an opportunity to stir up the disaffected Poles.[3] Accordingly, when Williams, after the adjustment of his new credentials, made his formal requisition he received from the King the noncommittal reply:

> I cannot say anything to the passage of the troops. It does not depend upon me for I alone can neither grant nor refuse them a passage through the Kingdom of Poland, and the other parts of the government are not now assembled. No answer therefore can be given to your requisition till there is a Diet.[4]

As a Diet could not meet before the Russian troops had crossed Poland, Brühl, who controlled his master's Polish policy as absolutely as he ruled in Saxony, although he had no constitutional position in Poland, could avoid committing himself.

Meantime Issarts and Castéra, the French resident at Warsaw, with the assistance of a special envoy from France, Colonel de la Salle, were doing their utmost to hinder the march of the troops. Once again Brühl was placed in an awkward dilemma between his French paymaster and his old allies. He adopted his customary method of speaking fair to both parties [5] and allowing things to take their course. Saxony could not possibly oppose the march of the Russians by force,[6] and Williams was justified in his conviction that so far as it could the Saxon court would facilitate rather than hinder their march. French attempts to hinder the Russian advance by creating disturbances in Poland naturally roused resentment at Dresden,[7] which Williams

[1] Williams to Chesterfield, 6 December.
[2] Hyndford to Williams, in Add. MSS. 11384, f. 430.
[3] Williams to Chesterfield, 14 and 19 December.
[4] Williams to Chesterfield, 6 January, 1748; Williams to Hyndford, 6 January, 1748, in Add. MSS. 11385, f. 15.
[5] While Loss at Versailles was assuring France that they would do everything in their power to delay the Russian troops, Flemming told W. Bentinck that "Le Roi ne pourroit pas l' [le passage] accorder publiquement, mais qu'il [le] favoriseroit sous main." (*Archives*, i, 129.)
[6] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 515.
[7] Droysen, v, Part 3, 431.

eagerly fostered.[1] But his efforts to improve the relations of Britain and Saxony were rendered useless by the renewed *rapprochement* of Britain and Prussia,[2] marked by Legge's special mission to Berlin. After the requisitorial letters had been adjusted,[3] Williams had no business at Dresden except to report the painfully slow progress of the "tardigated Russians." Through Count Perron, the Sardinian minister, Williams established a connection with the Princes Czartoryski, the heads of the Russian party in Poland, and received detailed reports from them to be forwarded to London.[4]

Brühl on this question showed the first signs of reaction from his Francophil tendencies. Saul remarked to Williams [5] that "perhaps the French demanded more from the King of Poland by virtue of the treaty of subsidies than that treaty obliged the King of Poland to perform." Nevertheless Brühl continued his mediation between France and Austria after the end of the 1747 campaign, but the old obstacle—France's refusal to sacrifice Prussia—made success impossible.[6] Williams's vigilance is proved by his discovery of these negotiations. Early in February he suspected the truth, and on 14 April he reported that the Saxon ministry believed that they had made some progress in mediating an Austro-French peace. The conclusion of Franco-British preliminaries of peace at Aix ended for the time Saxon hopes of reconciling Austria and France, but ultimately Austrian resentment at Britain's 'desertion' was to contribute to the diplomatic revolution which Saxon diplomacy had vainly attempted to effect since 1745.

Williams had only consented to go to Dresden as a *pis aller* instead of Turin, and a few months' stay at Dresden confirmed

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 3 April.

[2] Williams to Chesterfield, 25 February ; *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 141–2 ; Droysen, v, Part 3, 477 n.

[3] Williams to Chesterfield, 3 March ; Williams to Robinson, 18 April, in Add. MSS. 23827, f. 351.

[4] Williams had acted throughout the affair without consulting the Russian ambassador " in anything wherein secrecy is required " (Williams to Chesterfield, 27 January), in direct contradiction to his instructions and in the teeth of warnings from Hyndford (Hyndford to Williams, in Add. MSS. 11385, f. 73). Bestuzhev's complaints to Petersburg (copies annexed to Hyndford's letters to Newcastle of 8 and 16 March, O.S., S.P.F., Russia) brought upon Williams a reprimand from his court.

[5] Williams to Chesterfield, 13 February.

[6] *Geheimnisse*, i, 192–4.

him in his preference.[1] After months of wire-pulling he appealed on 1 and 2 May to Newcastle for a transfer to Turin, or, if that were impracticable, begged to be allowed to remain at Dresden instead of following the Saxon court on its biennial pilgrimage to Poland in order to hold a Diet which persistently refused to be held. Saxony [2] and Russia,[3] however, were urging upon the British Government that the presence of Williams at Warsaw was essential, because he was the minister who had made the requisition for the passage of the Russian troops, which would be violently attacked by the Franco-Prussian party in the Diet. Williams was therefore instructed [4] to proceed to Warsaw, and Newcastle replied to his request on 1 May by a curt note, which merely assured him that he would have leave to return to England before the winter.[5] Williams had already heard with chagrin [6] that his successor at Dresden had been chosen,[7] and that there was in the meantime no other court to which he could be sent. In defiance of official instructions, though possibly with the private assent of Newcastle, he remained at Dresden throughout the summer in harassing uncertainty about his future.[8] He spent the leisure which the departure of the court afforded, in compiling a history of Poland up to 1382,[9] transmitted in instalments to Fox, but "worthier of Goody Two-shoes than of the Right Hon. Henry,"[10] and in quarrelling with a certain Frederick Laurence,[11] formerly

[1] Horace Walpole, *Letters*, ii, 298; Williams to Fox, 22 March, 1748, in Add. MSS. 32811, f. 372; Fox to Williams, 17 February, O.S., in Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, i, 392; Williams to A. Stone, 2 May, 1748, in *ibid.*, i, 430.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 9 June.

[3] Hyndford to Newcastle, 29 March, O.S., in Add. MSS. 11385, f. 374.

[4] Newcastle to Williams, 13 May, O.S.

[5] Newcastle to Williams (private), 20 May, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32812, f. 217.

[6] Williams to Fox, 22 March, in Add. MSS. 32811, f. 372: "I like the employment of a foreign minister . . . and I have been as diligent in that office as anyone can be."

[7] Sir James Gray (Williams to Newcastle (private), 9 June, in Add. MSS. 32812, f. 261).

[8] Williams to Robinson, 4 September, in Add. MSS. 23829, f. 355.

[9] Printed in his *Works*, iii, i–lxxxi.

[10] Carlyle, vi, 172.

[11] See Sir Richard Lodge's article in *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, 4th series, ix, 63. Laurence's despatches are in S.P.F., Prussia, with a full account of the quarrel. Williams treated Laurence as one of his servants; Laurence insisted that he had an independent position. Laurence's chronic indebtedness (although he drew £300 sterling a year from the exchequer) caused his

secretary to Hyndford, British minister at Berlin, who had become disagreeable to Frederick and had been sent on to Dresden. At last, at the end of November, Williams received his letters of revocation with permission to return to England, if his health required it, without waiting for the return of the Saxon court from Warsaw.

Brühl's reaction towards his old allies, first manifest at the time of the Russian march through Poland, continued during the summer of 1748, while the court was in Poland. He attributed the rupture of the Polish Diet to the intrigues of France [1] and Prussia, and his reproaches provoked a personal quarrel between the French ambassador and himself.[2] Although Brühl was dissatisfied with the change of French policy in Poland, the rivalry of Saxony and Prussia for the favour of France continued. Frederick exploited the march of the Russian troops through Poland to discredit Saxony at Versailles,[3] and to reduce still further the chance of a Franco-Austrian peace negotiated by Saxony at the expense of Prussia.[4] Brühl retorted that Prussia was trying to prolong the war in her own selfish interest,[5] and attempted to use Prussia's *rapprochement* with Britain to sow distrust of Prussia at Versailles. Although the treaty of Aix slightly eased the rivalry of Prussia and Saxony for the friendship of France, it left Saxony with an additional grievance against her consistently successful rival, who had secured a European guarantee for Silesia, whereas Saxony had failed to obtain the inclusion in the treaty of the provisions she desired [6] —notably a formal recognition of the House of Wettin's right of succession to the Austrian dominions in default of Maria Theresa's line—and had failed likewise to effect the reconciliation of France and Austria.

letters to be sent with Williams's mail. This Laurence explains to Villiers (Add. MSS. 32811, f. 374) " is equally burdensome to him and disagreeable to me as he thinks fit to open them in too coarse and too perceptible a manner." After the quarrel Laurence remained at Dresden, but had no further intercourse with Williams or with the Saxon ministers.

[1] Farges, ii, 101–4.

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 299–300.

[3] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 462, 516 ; vi, 24, 28, 30.

[4] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 474 ; vi, 125.

[5] Cf. *Pol. Corr.*, v, 459 : " Je n'aurai guère à craindre de la mauvaise volonté de la cour de Vienne, si elle est obligée de continuer encore deux ans la guerre présente." (Frederick II to O. Podewils, 11 August, 1747.)

[6] See Newcastle's apologetic letter, dated 24 October/4 November, in S.P.F., Foreign Ministers, 36.

But the main cause of friction between Prussia and Saxony after the Treaty of Aix continued to be Prussian claims upon the Saxon *Steuer*. The *Steuer* [1] was the public bank of the estates of the electorate of Saxony. Individuals who lent money to the bank received in exchange negotiable bills bearing interest for a term of years payable at the fairs of Leipzig. The Saxon finances were, however, ruined by the extravagance of the court and the expenses of the unsuccessful wars of 1741–5. *Steuer* bills consequently depreciated and were bought and sold for considerably less than their face value, and the credit of the bank declined still further when the King, as an indirect method of taxation, took over its management from the estates and thus became the debtor of all the holders of *Steuer* bills. Many of these bills were held by the nationals of foreign states, especially of the United Provinces and Prussia, and Frederick had secured the insertion in the Treaty of Dresden of an article providing for the payment of Prussian creditors of the *Steuer* "without fail." The interpretation of this clause was henceforth a continual source of dispute between Prussia and Saxony. Frederick contended that it meant that his subjects should receive full and immediate satisfaction of their claims, both in regard to principal and interest, without regard to the claims of the other creditors of the *Steuer*.[2] Frederick, as usual, was claiming more than his due, and then threatening to enforce his claim by the sword. Brühl made half-hearted efforts to cut down expenditure, and raised new loans at exorbitant rates, but he was still unable to pay the full interest on, and repayments of, *Steuer* bills at Michaelmas 1747 and Easter 1748. Frederick II's complaints became more and more bellicose. Brühl's fear of bankruptcy was intensified by dread of a Prussian invasion, and at last he took measures in the summer of 1748 to stave off both dangers. Although it was said at Dresden that Brühl and Hennicke knew so much to the disadvantage of each other in the administration of the Saxon finances that they dared not quarrel, Brühl planned to dismiss Hennicke and throw the whole blame for the impending national bankruptcy on his shoulders. Plans were also

[1] A. E. Saxe, Supplément, 2, ff. 209 and 215; Böttiger, ii, 441–6; Droysen, v, Part 3, 425–7.
[2] *Pol. Corr.*, v, 503.

prepared for the reduction of the Saxon army to 16,000 men,[1] and some feeble attempts made to reduce the extravagance of the court. But these measures were insufficient, and Brühl appealed first to France [2] and then to Britain [3] for a loan, which both Governments refused. Saxon defalcations and Prussian threats continued therefore to embroil the relations of Saxony and Prussia.

The return of the Saxon court from Poland to Dresden was followed by changes in the diplomatic corps. Williams's closest friend, the Sardinian minister, was transferred to London. Count Michael Bestuzhev went to Vienna and was succeeded by Count Keyserling.[4] The good disposition of the new minister is indicated by his request that the British Government would urge Russia to send him instructions to co-operate with Williams at Dresden. Williams was delighted with the change, partly because of his quarrel with Bestuzhev, but mainly because the new minister lacked the personal weight of the great chancellor's brother, and would not therefore completely overshadow his British colleague. Shortly afterwards, on 12 April, 1749, the long-expected Austrian minister, Count Sternberg,[5] arrived at Dresden, where Austria had been unrepresented since June 1747.

The long interruption of Austro-Saxon relations was due partly to Austria's offended dignity, but chiefly to her conviction that Saxony was too far committed to France to be worth courting, while Saxon hostility to Prussia and the influence of Russia at Dresden could be relied upon to prevent Saxony slipping away altogether from the Austro-Russian alliance.[6] The

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 111, 330, 344 ; vii, 250, 259 ; Böttiger, ii, 444.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 16 January, 1749 ; Pelham to Williams, 28 February, O.S., in Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 76.

[3] Williams to Newcastle, 19 March ; *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 562–3.

[4] Keyserling had been for fifteen years Professor of Public Law at Königsberg (Droysen, v, Part 3, 314). Since January 1747 he had been Russian minister at Berlin. During his diplomatic career " his favourite and daily occupations " were logic and mathematics (Poniatowski, 36). Subsequently he developed religious mania which led him to support Prussia against the Catholic League of Austria and France (*Archives Voronzov*, v, 49, 58).

[5] He was a wealthy Bohemian magnate, who had been Bohemian minister at the Regensburg Diet (1745–8). The whole weight of affairs, it was believed at Dresden, would rest upon his wife, Maria Leopoldina von Starhemberg, a close personal friend of Maria Theresa. (Lippert, cxliv–cli ; *Pol. Corr.*, vii, 102.)

[6] Robinson to Williams, *passim*, especially 12 July and 23 August 1747, in Add. MSS. 23875 ; Williams to Chesterfield, 5 September, 1747 ; *Pol. Corr.*, v, 404, 450–1 ; also extracts from intercepted Austrian despatches in Droysen, v, Part 3, 347–9.

end of the war reduced Saxony's value to France, and the change of French policy in Poland in 1748 weakened Brühl's attachment to France, and offered Austria a good prospect of recovering her influence at Dresden. This was indeed essential after Maria Theresa's famous decision to hold fast to the old system, because Saxony was an invaluable link between the Austro-Russian allies. The real object of Sternberg's mission was therefore to renew the negotiation, which had been allowed to lapse, for Saxony's accession to the Treaty of the Two Empresses.

Meantime Fox was fighting an uphill struggle in the Ministry to secure for Williams a future in the diplomatic service, if necessary by a general shuffling of posts. "Sir Charles Williams," Horace Walpole wrote on 26 December, 1748,[1] "is the great obstacle to all arrangement: Mr Fox makes a point of his going to Turin; the Ministry, who do not love him, are not for his going anywhere."

In the end an unfortunate compromise was arranged. Williams was to receive the additional pay of minister plenipotentiary and to go to Berlin.[2] Although Williams's promotion was due mainly to the necessity of doing something for the bosom friend of Fox, he had, even in the eyes of the unsympathetic King and ministers, certain qualifications for the Berlin post. He had given close attention to Prussian affairs in the previous two years.[3] More important, George II was determined that the envoy to Berlin should not become, like Legge, an advocate of the Prussian alliance. Williams's anti-Prussian bias was well known, and he had the additional advantage that his appointment would not "give any jealousy to the King's allies"[4] as Legge's appointment had done. Contrary to expectations, the "King's allies" did their best to prevent Williams's mission, or at least to deprive it of any prospect of success.[5]

[1] Walpole, *Letters*, ii, 354.

[2] Formal letter of appointment, dated 18 April, O.S. Locke (*Hanbury Family*, 200) says the appointment was a reward for Fox's remaining Secretary at War. Coxe (*Historical Tour in Monmouthshire*, ii, 273) attributes the appointment to the express desire of the King.

[3] Legge expressly acknowledged his indebtedness to Williams for information of the state of the Prussian army, finances, etc. (Legge to A. Stone, 18/29 June, 1748, in Add. MSS. 32812, f. 308.)

[4] Newcastle to Williams, 18 April, O.S.

[5] Hyndford reports to Newcastle details of Frederick II's intimacy with

Williams's return from Dresden to England before taking up his new appointment was delayed, at first by his investigation [1] of a cock-and-bull story that the Young Pretender, recently expelled from France under the provisions of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, was in Poland. Shortly afterwards he received instructions[2] to wait at Dresden until he could find out the real object of Marshal Saxe's visit to his half-brother, the King of Poland. The British Government feared that he had instructions to overthrow Brühl and prolong the Franco-Saxon treaty of subsidy. The political, as distinct from the personal, objects of Saxe's mission are clearly stated in the following extract from a despatch to Issarts : [3]

> Quelque amitié que le Roi puisse avoir pour le Roi de Pologne S. M^té^ consentira difficilement à faire avec ce Prince un nouveau traité de subsides dont elle ne retirera pas plus d'utilité que de celui qui subsiste actuellement, mais nous entendrons ce que M. le M^al^ de Saxe nous rapportera . . . avant que d'en venir à une résolution finale sur cet article . . . si [Saxe] pouvoit parvenir à mettre plus d'harmonie entre [les cours de Berlin et de Dresde] il feroit un excellent ouvrage. . . .

Williams reported, however, that Saxe's visit was due chiefly to his

> desire to see his native country, which he loves and where he is much beloved, attachment to the King of Poland, and perhaps an inclination to receive the flattery of his own countrymen upon his late success . . . for I never saw any man so pleased with the coarsest adulation as Saxe is [4] . . . he is more vain than any Frenchman he ever commanded and his whole discourse, public and private, turns upon the late campaign in Flanders, always endeavouring to show that the French would not have beat the allies

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the Jacobites (manufactured by Gross at Berlin) and adds that this "will save His Majesty the trouble of sending Sir Charles Hanbury Williams or any other minister to that perfidious court" (19 June, in Add. MSS. 11387, f. 444).

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 1 May, etc., 1749; Lang, *Pickle the Spy*, 53–60.

[2] Newcastle to Williams, 19 May, O.S.

[3] A. E. Saxe, Supplément 2, f. 154, dated 2 July, 1749.

[4] *Cf.* Maurice de Saxe to Brühl, 10 December, 1746, in Vitzthum, 108–9: "Je vous assure entre nous que si [les Français] ne m'avaient pas, ils ne sauraient où donner de la tête. Hommes, argent, rien ne leur manque, *aber sie wissen es nicht einzurichten.*"

> had he not commanded.[1] He speaks of French officers with the greatest contempt and says they will not take the pains to understand their trade and have not courage to execute their General's orders . . .

a significant comment in view of the total military collapse of France in the Seven Years War.[2]

Saxe's main object was neither to overthrow Brühl nor to prolong the treaty of subsidies, but, as Williams discovered, to prepare the way for his election to the duchy of Courland [3]—a fief of Poland which had been occupied by Russian troops since the death of the last of the native dukes. "Saxe is tired of fighting for other people . . . his ambition is to become a sovereign." [4] For success he needed at least the support of Prussia backed by France and Saxony—a most improbable combination—and in any case he would be resolutely opposed by Russia. Brühl and Frederick II, however, both gave more or less indefinite assurances of their support. After Saxe had left Dresden Williams was free to return to England. He stopped at Anspach for a few days to invest the Margrave with the Order of the Garter,[5] and at the Hague,[6] where his meddling [7] with Count Gronsfeld, a Dutch diplomatist and politician, in the business of the subsidy to Cologne aroused the hostility of Holderness, the British ambassador.

Immediately after his return to England Williams drew up three papers on foreign affairs. In the first [8] he develops, in accordance with Newcastle's instructions at their first meeting,

[1] *Cf.* Poniatowski, 12–13.

[2] Another remark of Saxe's shows how the wind was blowing towards the Diplomatic Revolution which preluded the Seven Years War: "If the King of Prussia continued in his present way of proceeding all the chief Powers of Europe would find themselves obliged to fall upon him and bring him to reason." *Cf.* Puysieulx's remark to Yorke: "si le Roi de Prusse troubloit le premier le repos la France se déclareroit contre lui." (S.P.F., France.)

[3] Although Yorke at Paris (4/15 March, 1749, to Bedford, in Add. MSS. 32816, f. 205) reported that Saxe's object was to assert his pretensions to the duchy of Courland, Williams was left to discover this for himself—one of the many illustrations of the lack of connection between the Northern and Southern departments.

[4] Williams to Newcastle, 30 July.

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 26 August; *London Gazette*, No. 8879.

[6] Holderness to Newcastle, 29 August/9 September, S.P.F., Holland, 449; *London Gazette*, No. 8881.

[7] S.P.F., Holland, 449; Add. MSS. 32818, f. 210, f. 239.

[8] S.P.F., Poland, dated 11 September, O.S.

an elaborate scheme for subsidising the leading German princes, weighs the advantages in each case, and concludes that the scheme would raise a new spirit in the Empire and render France and Prussia powerless for harm there. This paper placed Williams on Newcastle's side in the struggle which he was waging single-handed in the Cabinet on the question of subsidy treaties in time of peace.[1]

Another memorandum drawn up by Williams proposed a solution of the controversy over subsidy treaties. He suggested that the real object of these treaties should not be, as Newcastle had originally proposed, to obtain troops for use if war broke out, but to secure the election of the Archduke Joseph, the eldest son of Maria Theresa, as King of the Romans.

Newcastle readily adopted Williams's modification of his proposals. The conclusion of subsidy treaties in time of peace was unprecedented in British diplomacy, and would certainly be denounced in the House of Commons as a preparation for war. Williams, on the other hand, argued that his scheme would at the same time buttress the old system and prevent the outbreak of war on the Continent on the death of the Emperor. This proposal cut the ground from under the feet of Newcastle's opponents, not only in the Cabinet, but in Parliament, since it was impossible to oppose the spending of a small sum of money to prevent a war which would cost millions to the British exchequer. Unfortunately neither Newcastle nor Williams realised the force of the obstacles which stood in the way of success. The chief difficulty was the imperial constitution, which prescribed stringent conditions upon such elections, and gave the opponents of them endless pretexts for delay and opposition. Moreover, some of the princes would certainly seize the opportunity to press their claims upon the imperial house, and their claims would be supported by Prussia and France in order to thwart the plans of Britain and prevent what they regarded as a dangerous

[1] See Chapter V, *infra*, especially at pp. 68–9. The Newport Papers contain a MS. in which Williams resolutely opposes the giving of subsidies and supports most strenuously Pelham's "œconomous measures." From internal evidence this (undated) document must have been composed during Williams's leisure at Dresden in 1749. Apparently he decided that it would pay him better to take up Newcastle's side. Hence these three papers were left by him in the Secretary of State's office, and the earlier document was allowed to remain uncompleted among his own papers.

precedent. These difficulties ultimately prevented the execution of Williams's programme.[1]

Not content with forging the weapon which gave Newcastle a victory over his colleagues in the Cabinet and enabled him to execute his plans for a system of subsidy treaties with the German princes, Williams drew up a third paper,[2] designed to convert the opponents of subsidy treaties in Parliament and the country. Obviously he could not make public the proposed secret preparations to elect the eldest Archduke, so he fell back on other arguments. He began by attacking the inevitable reaction in England at the end of an exhausting war against close association with Continental affairs. Commercial and colonial development requires the maintenance of peace, and this can best be guaranteed by the payment of subsidies, which will give Britain a stable system on the Continent. Suppose, Williams argues, a war breaks out with France when we have no Continental allies. Even if we gain

> considerable advantages over France we could neither keep them nor push them to that degree which in other circumstances we might do, because being unprovided with sufficient strength upon the Continent, France would not fail to revenge her losses in America upon those Powers in Europe which England could never see destroyed.

When war breaks out, Williams continues, there will be a popular outcry against the Government for not adopting the inexpensive method of subsidy treaties to prevent the exorbitant expenses of war and "that danger and confusion [the Jacobite Rebellion] into which a state of war has so lately brought these kingdoms."

By these three papers Williams had burned his boats.[3] Originally his attachment had been to Pelham,[4] and hitherto he had tried to keep on equally good terms with Pelham [5] and with Newcastle. Henceforth Pelham regarded him with aversion, but he had won the goodwill of Newcastle—the indispensable basis of a successful career in the diplomatic service.

[1] On the election question see the article in *English Historical Review*, July 1927, by the present writer.
[2] S.P.F., Poland, dated 21 October, 1749. [3] *Supra*, p. 49 n.
[4] *Supra*, Chapter I, pp. 14–15. [5] Williams to Fox, in *Works*, iii, 79.

CHAPTER IV

WILLIAMS'S MISSION TO BERLIN (1750–1)

Williams at Hanover—Newcastle fails to secure Pelham's approval of subsidy for Saxony—Tension between Britain and Prussia revealed in Williams's instructions—Hanoverian influences on British foreign policy—Williams is coldly received at Berlin—The Tartar "envoy"—Williams goes to Warsaw—His success—Reversal of Saxon policy—Frederick ostracises Williams and requests his recall —The election negotiations increase tension between Britain and Prussia—Williams recalled from Berlin—His failure due partly to the mutual hostility of Britain and Prussia, but chiefly to his own folly.

Son père [Frederick William I] avoit logé à Potzdam dans une vilaine maison; il [Frederick II] en fit un Palais. Potzdam devint une jolie ville; Berlin s'agrandissoit; on commençoit à y connoître les douceurs de la vie que le feu Roi avoit très négligées. Quelques personnes avoient des Meubles: la plupart même portaient des chemises; car sous le règne précédent on ne connoissoit guère que les devants de chemises qu'on attachoit avec des cordons et le Roi régnant n'avait pas été élevé autrement.

Les choses changeoient à vue d'œil. Lacédémone devenoit Athènes.

VOLTAIRE, *Mémoires* (Londres, 1784), pp. 59–60

[*Frederick II*] *is great in great things and little in little things.*

Williams's correspondence, quoted in Walpole, *George II*, i, 452–61

WILLIAMS spent the winter and spring of 1749–50 in England, and did not reach Hanover, on the way to take up his post at Berlin, until the end of May.[1] There he remained for a month in close contact with Newcastle, who was chiefly occupied in securing the proposed election of a King of the Romans—Williams's child, which Newcastle had adopted as his own. While at Hanover Williams advocated securing the votes which had brought about the election of the Emperor in 1745. He then advised Newcastle to offer Prussia the imperial guarantee of Silesia as the price of the Prussian vote, at the same time intimating that if the offer were refused the election would be proceeded with and Prussia would get nothing. This scheme might have proved successful, but the division in the British Cabinet and divergences between Britain and Austria prevented its adoption. As the next immediate step towards the carrying through of the election Williams advocated the

[1] H. V. Jones to Hardwicke, 20/31 May, in Add. MSS. 35410, f. 213.

giving of a subsidy to Saxony.[1] He succeeded in convincing Newcastle, but failed to convince the King, who was annoyed with his defaulting debtor, the Elector of Saxony. Newcastle, as a last resort, was forced to appeal to Pelham.

"The scheme of making a King of the Romans," he wrote,[2]

> is as I said before talked of though covertly as a solid system for the Empire and as what will *éterniser* the King's honour. . . . Sir Charles Williams says, do that and Harry Fox will approve of subsidies; no subsidies are proposed but upon that principle; and I really think the news from America shows the necessity of making ourselves as strong in Europe as possible. . . . I should be glad of Saxony. They (*sic*) may I am convinced be easily and cheaply had: and they may be necessary to fix and secure the great object. . . .

But Pelham proved as obstinate as the King, and Newcastle was forced to report his failure to Williams:

"All my letters from England," he wrote,[3]

> and all my discourse in the closet at Hanover convince me of the impossibility of giving subsidies to the King of Poland. . . . I have often told Flemming [a well-known Saxon diplomatist] when my master was on my side I could differ with my colleagues; and when I agreed with my colleagues I could humbly presume to make representations in hopes of altering His opinion:—but against master and colleagues it was impossible to attempt anything.

The views of the King and of Newcastle in sending Williams to Berlin were clearly stated by Newcastle in a despatch to Keith: [4]

> In the present situation of things and in order to procure the best intelligence of the true state of them [referring to the Northern crisis] His Majesty has been pleased to order Sir Charles Hanbury Williams to set out . . . to Berlin. His orders will be to hold with firmness the same language upon the affairs of the North as has been used to the Prussian ministers here and at Vienna.

This forecast was entirely confirmed by the "secret instructions" [5] drawn up for Williams at Hanover, which bear evident

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 22 July, in Add. MSS. 32822, f. 153.
[2] Newcastle to Pelham, 9/20 June, in Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 345.
[3] Newcastle to Williams, 18/29 July, in Add. MSS. 32822, f. 225.
[4] Separate and very secret, 6 April, O.S., in Add. MSS. 35468, f. 197.
[5] Dated 20 June/1 July, in S.P.F., Prussia.

marks of the strained relations between Britain and Prussia and show little disposition on the British side to improve them. Williams was to inform his Prussian Majesty of George II's "desire and intention to live in perfect friendship and good correspondence with [him] and to maintain our treaties subsisting with him," but was never to forget the "strict union and concert" existing between Britain, Austria, Russia, and the United Provinces. The rest of the instructions reduced his *rôle* at Berlin to that of an official spy. He was to find out the number and condition of the Prussian troops, the state of the finances, the disposition of Frederick II as to peace or war, his intentions as to Sweden, his intrigues in the Empire, in Poland, with the Ottoman Porte, and with the Jacobites. Finally, Williams was ordered to go to Warsaw to attend the Polish Diet, and do his utmost, in close concert with the King of Poland, to defeat the intrigues of France and Prussia.

These instructions show how during Newcastle's Secretaryship the Hanoverian influences over British foreign policy, against which Walpole had fought with success, were again in the ascendant. Pelham alone of the directors of British foreign policy seems to have desired a *rapprochement* with Prussia [1] and, in ignorance of Williams's instructions, cherished some faint hope of improvement in the relations of Britain and Prussia.

"I am glad to find," he writes sarcastically to Newcastle,[2]

> that the great northern minister, Sir Charles Williams, is gone to Berlin, where he has my good wishes for a long continuance. His fertile genius can do no hurt there; and if he writes as many odes as the King of Prussia can read I shall grudge him neither his wit nor his applause.

Unfortunately political and personal divergences prevented the realisation of Pelham's vision of two kindred poetasters eagerly reading their bad verses to each other.

The British Government dreaded that Williams's mission would impair the cordiality of their relations with the two empresses; Frederick II feared that it would give umbrage to

[1] Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, i, 442–3.
[2] *Ibid.*, ii, 350 (2/13 July).

France.[1] From the moment of his arrival at Berlin[2] the atmosphere was tense with mutual suspicion—especially since the warlike preparations of Russia[3] against Sweden, on the pretexts of a boundary dispute in Finland and of a possible change in the Swedish constitution, of which Russia was a guarantor, had again brought the protracted "Northern crisis" to a head. Williams's audience of the King was as formal as possible and "lasted exactly five minutes and a half."[4] From the first the new envoy, whom Frederick had stigmatised as a "dangerous intriguer," and whom he was determined to punish for George II's coldness towards Klingräffen,[5] was treated with a "distinguished shyness"[6] by the two dummy Foreign Ministers, Podewils and Finckenstein. Williams therefore found himself in a difficult position, and not unnaturally was nervous and ready to see slights even if none had been intended. Offended by the coolness of his reception, he ostentatiously paraded his intimacy with the ministers of Prussia's enemies, Count Puebla, the Austrian, and Gross, the Russian minister, the latter of whom was especially obnoxious at court.[7] Williams soon gained an ascendancy over Puebla and Gross, but by dethroning Bülow, the Saxon minister, from his leadership of the anti-Prussian diplomatic corps he made a powerful enemy at Berlin,[8] who did him all the harm in his power.

The arrival at Berlin of a mysterious Tartar[9] gave Williams his first opportunity to perform his duty as a spy. It was officially given out that the Tartar had come to claim some Tartar soldiers who were serving in the Prussian army. This was the truth, but Frederick knew that in diplomacy if one told

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 16.

[2] On 7 July, N.S.

[3] Williams to Newcastle, 11/22 July; *Mémoires de Frédéric II*, i, 399.

[4] Extract of Williams's report of it printed in Walpole, *George II*, i, 449–50, and in Carlyle, vi, 170–1.

[5] *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 549; vii, 178.

[6] Williams to Newcastle, 1 August.

[7] *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 427, 488; vii, 161, 199, 204, etc.; viii, 61–2, etc.

[8] His suspicions of Bülow's disloyalty to his own court and still more to the "good cause" are supported by Frederick's comments on Bülow, especially in *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 449; viii, 404.

[9] Williams to Newcastle, 25 July; *London Gazette*, No. 8975. The affair is finally cleared up in Porter's letter to Williams (appended to Williams's letter to Newcastle of 8 December). *Cf.* Porter to Bedford, 23 November, in Add. MSS. 32825, f. 102, and Williams to Keith, 18 August, 1750, in Add. MSS. 35469, f. 130. Full details in the *Berlin Journal* (in Newport Papers) and *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 38, 60, 79, 132, 142.

the truth one was usually disbelieved. In order to throw suspicion on his own story he treated the envoy with "much ridiculous respect," in order to alarm Russia with the bogey of an alliance between Prussia and Turkey,[1] and restrain her from making the threatened attack upon Sweden, which Prussia was bound to support by the defensive alliance of 1746.

Williams received instructions on 31 July to go to Warsaw, and he set out the next day, arriving on 6 August, just in time to be present at the dissolution of the Diet on the following day. The ostensible reason for his journey, which he had formally intimated to the Prussian ministers,[2] was to be present at the Diet as Britain had not yet appointed his successor at Dresden. The real reasons [3] were to inform Brühl of the steps so far taken in the election of the King of the Romans; to try without promising a subsidy to win his concurrence in the election; to smooth over Saxony's natural resentment at the preference given to Bavaria, which was to receive a British subsidy; to find out if Saxony's irritation would lead her to try and renew her former subsidy treaty with France, and to prevent it if possible. To these manifold tasks Williams added the elucidation of the mystery of the Tartar envoy, who had traversed Poland on his way to Berlin. The unexpected dissolution of the Diet robbed Williams of the ostensible object of his mission, but he remained at Warsaw and carried out with unexpected ease the commissions entrusted to him. His first step was to make a bargain with the heads of the Czartoryski faction in Poland, whose support, in view of Franco-Prussian intrigues, seemed essential to the maintenance of the Polish crown in the Saxon family. They promised to use the influence upon Brühl which this position gave them against the renewal of the Franco-Saxon treaty of subsidy. Williams agreed in exchange to use his influence over Brühl to secure for the followers of the Czartoryski all the vacant offices in Poland. With this additional strength they would be more than a match for the Franco-Prussian party, and hoped to be able, with Brühl's co-operation, to restore some measure of order and good government to their distracted country.

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 24, 29, 35.
[2] Williams to Newcastle, 1 August ; *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 40.
[3] Newcastle to Williams (private), 18/29 July. Cf. *Geheimnisse*, i, 210–1.

Williams, having prepared the ground, then had an interview with Brühl, in which he repeated the stock arguments against a Franco-Saxon treaty. Alliance with France left Saxony at the mercy of France's ally Prussia, "because France was too interested and too ambitious and too political a Power not to decide every dispute that happened between two of her allies in favour of the strongest." If the French alliance was dangerous to the Elector of Saxony it was suicidal for the King of Poland, whose throne was endangered by the intrigues of France and Prussia.[1] Williams summed up his arguments thus:

> The consequences of going on in the hands of France were, first, the continuation of Prussian insults and tyranny in Saxony, second, the acquiescing under the insolent intrigues of France in Poland, calculated to destroy all the present and future views of His Polish Majesty in that Republic, third, the absolute loss of the confidence and assistance of the ancient and natural allies of Saxony.

Brühl, annoyed at France for her dilatory payment of the subsidies due to Saxony, and furious at the dissolution of the Diet, which he attributed to Franco-Prussian intrigues,[2] agreed in principle with Williams, but pointed out that if France preferred Prussia, Britain had given a visible preference over Saxony to Bavaria. Williams replied that it was necessary to bring Bavaria into the old system, Saxony was already an integral part of it. He added adroitly that the present Elector of Bavaria had never once "squinted towards France" and had restored his finances by economy, leaving Brühl to draw the conclusion that if he followed the Bavarian example he *might* be similarly rewarded. Williams then demanded as a guarantee of Saxony's good faith a promise that she would not renew her expiring treaty of subsidy with France. Brühl was apparently impressed, and soon summoned Williams to a second conference, at which Keyserling was also present. He began by demanding once again that Britain should compensate Saxony for the loss of French subsidy. Williams interrupted him and declared categorically that Britain could not at present pay any subsidy to Saxony.[3] Keyserling then supported

[1] On these see *Pol. Corr.*, vii, 341, 381, 397–9, etc.; viii, 7, 47, 52–3, etc.
[2] *Berlin Journal*, 8 and 9 August.
[3] This incident bears marks of being concerted in advance with Brühl, so

Williams's demand for a guarantee of Saxony's loyalty to the old system. Williams proposed an expedient, which he had previously agreed upon with Keyserling, and which Brühl accepted on the spot. The King of Poland was to declare upon his royal word that he would enter into no further pecuniary engagements with France, but would return with the utmost cordiality to his ancient and natural allies. The King made the required declaration severally to Keyserling and to Williams, but requested that the assurances he had given should be kept secret from Austria, because "the time might come when he might do considerable services to the House of Austria [in the election question] and would then have some things to ask of that court."

Williams boasted that even without the subsidy he had taken Saxony out of the hands of France [1] and greatly strengthened the Austro-Russian alliance. His success, partial though it was, was much relished in London.

"Sir Charles Williams," Horace Walpole wrote,[2] with his usual sprightly exaggeration,

> . . . is the present ruling star of our negotiations. He has met the ministers of the two angry Empresses and pacified Russian savageness and Austrian haughtiness.[3] He is to teach the monarch of Prussia to fetch and carry, unless they happen to treat in iambics or begin to settle the limits of Parnassus instead of those of Silesia.

Williams made no attempt to account for his unexpectedly easy success, except to remark that the Elector of Saxony believed "the Czarina [to be] his best refuge against Prussian insults," leaving it to be inferred that the main reasons, apart from

as to disarm the suspicions of Pelham mentioned in Hardwicke's letter to Newcastle of 5 July, O.S., 1750 (Add. MSS. 35410, f. 268).

[1] He knew that this was a gross exaggeration. The *Berlin Journal* reveals Brühl's attempt to explain away his assurances by altering the protocol of the conferences. The main point in dispute seems to have been the insertion of some assurance of subsidies, which Williams had probably given privately, but dared not allow to appear in an official document. The struggle over this point accounts for Williams's long stay at Warsaw and proves the instability of his success. Unless Britain paid a subsidy it could only be temporary, and within a few weeks there were rumours of renewed subsidy negotiations between France and Saxony.

[2] Walpole to Mann, 20 September, 1750, in *Letters* (ed. Toynbee), iii, 17. Cf. *ibid.*, 20.

[3] There appears to be no foundation, in fact, for this sentence.

Russian influence at Dresden, were the cogency of his arguments and his personal ascendancy over Count Brühl and the King.

More fundamental causes of the sudden reversal of Saxon policy are not hard to find. Brühl had always insisted that Saxony's financial position required a subsidy from whatever Power would give one. The Saxon finances were worse in 1750 than in 1747—the difference was, as Brühl himself had foreseen, that France after the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was no longer willing to subsidise Saxony for doing nothing. Brühl had failed to secure the prolongation of the French treaty of subsidies;[1] Britain therefore must be courted as the only other Power which might conceivably give Saxony a subsidy. When he heard that Britain was bringing forward the election of a King of the Romans he saw that his chances of getting a subsidy were greatly improved; and when, shortly before Williams's arrival at Warsaw, the Elector of Cologne began to make difficulties about giving his vote[2] it became almost a certainty that the Saxon vote would ultimately have to be bought.

Williams doubtless told Brühl of the controversy in the Cabinet, assured him that Newcastle was already converted, and that the surrender of the remaining ministers would follow in the natural course of events. He hinted that all that was required was for Brühl to stop "squinting at France," and Brühl was ready to make the experiment. Even more important in Brühl's eyes than the receiving of subsidies was the formation of the great anti-Prussian coalition. The strained relations of Saxony and Prussia increased Saxony's need either of subsidies to pay off the *Steuer* debts to Prussia, or of a powerful coalition to protect her from Prussian threats. Just as in 1746 Brühl had combined the two policies by taking subsidies from France and trying to reconcile France and Austria at Prussia's expense, so now he hoped to get subsidies from Britain[3] and use his influence to accentuate the anti-Prussian bias of British policy. He was perfectly willing to sacrifice in

[1] Newcastle to Williams, 18/29 July, 1750.

[2] *Cf.* Major General Borck to His Majesty, 8 August, in Add. MSS. 32822, f. 287.

[3] The financial stringency affected the reversal of Saxon policy in another way, since Augustus III dared not offend George II, when the repayment of the money he had borrowed from the Elector of Hanover was being discussed. (Williams to Newcastle (very private), 2, 23 September.)

the meantime his intimacy with France if it proved necessary to attain his new object, because the task of reconciling Austria and France, which he had undertaken during the Austrian succession war, was now in the able hands of Kaunitz, the newly appointed Austrian ambassador at Paris.

An important contributory cause of Brühl's decision was the situation in Poland—where the influence of the Saxon House was steadily declining owing to the lack of attention given by Brühl to Polish affairs, and, since the subsidy treaty of 1746, to the vacillation of the court between the French and Russian parties in Poland. The growing anarchy in the Republic of Poland alarmed Brühl, who regarded it as a possible refuge if he were driven from Saxony.[1] Moreover, the advancing years of the King made it desirable to arrange the Polish succession in advance [2]—so far as this could be done in view of the Polish constitution—and thus prevent on this occasion the war of the Polish succession which usually followed each election. Irritated by the intrigues of France [3] and Prussia, which had prevented the preliminary steps for strengthening the monarchy from being even discussed at the Diet of 1750, and finding that these preliminary steps had the support of the Czartoryski, Brühl had an additional reason for breaking off the French connection and resuming the closest connection with Russia, which had placed Augustus III on the throne and whose adherents in Poland were alone willing to strengthen the authority of the executive—the indispensable preliminary to the realisation of the Saxon plans.[4] For the first time since Augustus III's accession all the important offices were given to the Czartoryski faction,[5] thus cementing the alliance of the court with the Czartoryski and strengthening, as Brühl hoped, the royal power. Williams, the close ally of the Czartoryski, shared Brühl's hopes that such "steady measures well pursued would bring this Republic into some form in a short time."

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 23 September, 1750.

[2] France and Frederick II were beginning to concert measures. (*Pol. Corr.*, viii, 97, 112.)

[3] See Issarts' instructions for the 1750 Diet in Farges, ii, 105–7.

[4] Williams communicated to Brühl news of French designs to secure the Prince of Conti's succession, which confirmed Brühl's fears. (Williams to Newcastle, 12 August, 1750; *Berlin Journal*, 8 August.)

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 22 August and 23 September, 1750.

Flushed with triumph and full of self-importance,[1] Williams returned to his post at Berlin after six weeks' absence. His reception in July had been cold, but on his return in September [2] it was glacial. "Since my return," he reports,[3]

> from Poland there is a very visible alteration in His Prussian Majesty's behaviour towards me. At his levee on Monday last he spoke to every foreign minister present except myself, whom he affected not to see though I stood directly before him.

The ministers no longer treated him with a "distinguished shyness," but refused to discuss business with him at all. On Williams's own showing they were fully justified, since, to take one example, he records on 27 October in his diary (kept with the intention of proving the propriety of his conduct!): "Told Podewils all our differences with Spain were settled in order to vex him."

Soon Williams found himself an outcast not only at court, but in Berlin society [4]—a position which cut his pride to the quick, the more so because, in the first weeks of his residence at Berlin, he had fancied that he was cutting a fine figure in society. His especial favourites at court had been the Queen Mother—George II's sister—and Princess Amalia, who repaid his flattery in the same coin. The Queen Mother, for example, assured him on one occasion that his "conversation was so agreeable that she did not know how to rise from table." Doubtless Frederick did his best to ostracise Williams,[5] but the conduct of the British envoy was not such as to make him a favourite in Berlin society. Thus he records in the *Berlin Journal* on 15 September:

> Went to Count Podewils for dinner where there were twenty people at table and the company consisted entirely of persons with whom I do not live: the late Lord Marshal among them. So I put on a

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[1] *Berlin Journal*, 6 September.
[2] On 9 September, not, as Satow states, "in October" (Satow, 33).
[3] Williams to Newcastle, 3 October. Cf. *Berlin Journal*, 10 November, etc.
[4] *Berlin Journal*, 1 January, 1751. *Cf.* Williams to Keith, 5/16 January, in Add. MSS. 35470, ff. 116, 143.
[5] *Cf.* Frederick's action towards Weingarten (*Pol. Corr.*, vi, 162).

sullen dignity, eat (*sic*) my pudding and held my tongue. I went away very soon after dinner to see Celia.[1]

Williams had only himself to blame when on New Year's Day 1751 he "went to the opera, spoke to nobody, and nobody spoke to [him]." [2]

As the attitude of Frederick II and his ministers practically prevented Williams from performing the work of an envoy, he flung himself eagerly into his work as a spy, chiefly with a view to finding out the extent of Frederick's connection with the Jacobites.[3] These attempts had no result [4] except to irritate Frederick still further. Finding that Klingräffen's recall did not lead to Williams's departure, Frederick II instructed [5] Michell, his secretary at London, to complain of Williams's conduct in making "discourses at Berlin by no means proper for preserving the good correspondence between the two courts." [6] Newcastle naturally asked what was the nature of these discourses, and, as Michell could give no information on this point, he advised Williams to find out from the Prussian ministers what were the exact charges against him.

When he found that Michell's complaints did not procure Williams's recall Frederick changed his tactics, abandoned the charges against him, and ordered Michell to solicit the recall as

[1] Celia was Williams's *inamorata* of the moment. *Cf.* his extraordinary entry in the *Journal* of 14 September : ". . . sent some larks to Celia, broke off entirely with Kesselia . . . thought of Celia all dinner time but not enough to hinder my eating a good deal. Went to the play to meet Celia. From the play I came home. Celia and some of the Queen's Maids of Honour and a great deal of company supped here. Celia looked charming . . . and staid here till one o'clock in the morning. Went to bed and dreamt all night of Celia."

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 17 October.

[3] Lang, *Pickle the Spy*, 108, 117–8.

[4] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 157. Michell on 26 October had reported (*ibid.*, 138) that Williams had represented Frederick II's Emden Company and everything else in Prussia in the worst light.

[5] Newcastle to Williams, 27 November, O.S.; Frederick to Michell, 19 December, 1750 : " J'aimerais bien qu'on m'envoyât un autre sujet moins prévenu et mieux intentionné que celui-ci, ou qui au moins saurait mieux se cacher que lui." (*Pol. Corr.*, viii, 195.) A second complaint was lodged by Michell on 30 December. Newcastle, Michell reports, demanded proofs and " ne me parût pas convaincu et nous nous séparâmes de la sorte " (*ibid.*, 226–7).

[6] The Prussian ministers refused to give him any satisfaction. (Williams to Newcastle, 26 December.)

a mark of George II's friendship towards the King of Prussia,[1] adding the threat that he might forbid Williams to appear at court.[2] His request was therefore granted, especially as it was obviously useless to keep Williams at Berlin when neither the King nor the ministers would transact business with him.[3] Henceforth the British Government's sole idea was to get Williams away from Berlin without a grave diplomatic incident. Newcastle's evident anxiety led Mirepoix, the French ambassador at London, to offer his services in securing Williams's audience of leave. This offer was not accepted, and, to make certain that no incident would occur, Williams was instructed to quit Berlin without taking leave,[4] as his colleague Gross had done a few months earlier, unless Podewils would promise that he would receive civil treatment.

Before Frederick heard of Williams's recall he had manifested his resentment against the British Government by making (in a Note communicated to the Austrian court [5]) extraordinarily strong reflections upon the action of the "youngest elector of the Empire" in negotiating clandestinely and contrary to the Golden Bull for the election of the Archduke Joseph without regard to the rights and dignity "of the most important and most venerable electors." This was to touch the King and Newcastle at their tenderest point. Williams naturally made the most of this offensive declaration in his despatches,[6] and probably exaggerated what he had done when conversing with his friends at Berlin. Frederick II, alarmed by Williams's talk,[7] was afraid that Britain and Austria would take up the matter strongly. He repented of his hasty action,[8] and appealed to France not to disapprove of the words used in the Note.[9] After some hesita-

[1] Newcastle to Williams, 11 January, O.S., 1751 ("a very material and comforting letter," Williams comments in the *Berlin Journal*, 31 January). Cf. *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 273.

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 226–7.

[3] Cf. *Berlin Journal*, 6 December: "The Prussian ministers have quite left off speaking to me and I to them, and I believe we shall never say anything more to each other but by express command of our masters."

[4] Newcastle to Williams, 11/22 January, O.S.

[5] Printed in *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 233–6, and in *Preuss. Staats.*, ii, 351–7. The original draft had been previously modified and approved by Tyrconnell (*Pol. Corr.*, viii, 236–8).

[6] *Cf.* Droysen, v, Part 4, 241.

[7] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 244, 249 and n.

[8] *Ibid.*, viii, 293.

[9] Frederick II to Tyrconnell, 6 February, in Add. MSS. 32826, f. 141 (printed in *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 249); Tyrconnell to Puysieulx, 9 February, f. 139.

tion the British Government did not demand an apology from Prussia,[1] but contented themselves with sending a despatch to Williams, couched in Newcastle's loftiest style, which was not put into cipher so as to make certain [2] that it would come to the eyes of Frederick II. "We are so used," Newcastle wrote, "to such flights from Berlin that the best answer is to pass them over in indifference and contempt." [3] The despatch then attributed Frederick's aspersions to his fear that he would have to concur after all in the election, lest he should lose the imperial guarantee of Silesia.

In this sultry atmosphere Williams had his audience of leave,[4] which probably constitutes a record in diplomatic insincerity and most undiplomatic brevity. "Sir," said the departing envoy,

> " the King my master has ordered me to deliver this letter to your Majesty; to assure you of the continuation of His friendship; at the same time humbly to take leave of your Majesty." To which the King of Prussia answered, " Make my compliments to the King your master; and assure Him of the continuation of my friendship." [5]

The main responsibility for this disastrous termination of Williams's mission to Berlin rests with Williams himself. It is true that any British minister would have met with the same reception as Williams received at the opening of his mission.[6] Frederick cordially detested his uncle George II, and the end of the Austrian succession war, coupled with the consolidation of the Franco-Prussian alliance, enabled him to display his antipathy with impunity. He believed, or at least pretended to believe,[7] that Britain was supporting Russia in the Northern

[1] They interpreted the declaration favourably that Prussia would acquiesce in the election on certain not impracticable conditions, and were therefore the less inclined to quarrel with its form. (Newcastle to Williams (secret), 8/19 February, 1751.) In any case they had no desire to make relations with Prussia still worse, since this might lead to war. (Bedford to Albemarle, 31 January, O.S., 1751, in S.P.F., France, 240 (1).)

[2] Newcastle to Williams, 8 February, O.S.

[3] Newcastle to Williams, 5 February, O.S. *Cf.* Newcastle to Keith, 1 February, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32826, f. 209.

[4] 4 March (*Pol. Corr.*, viii, 286).

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 6 March.

[6] See on Anglo-Prussian relations at this time Lodge, 77–9.

[7] Probably his belief was sincere, because Frederick II never understood British Constitutionalism and greatly exaggerated the influence of the King upon British foreign policy.

crisis and encouraging her to involve Prussia in war by making an attack on Sweden. He was furious at Britain's refusal to pay compensation to the owners of the Prussian ships and cargoes seized during the Austrian succession war by British warships, and argued that the decisions of the British prize courts were contrary to international law. And in November 1750 Britain acceded to the Treaty of the Two Empresses,[1] which Frederick had always suspected was directed against Prussia. He knew also of the beginning of a negotiation for a subsidy treaty between Britain and Russia, designed "to keep Prussia in awe," [2] and was furious at the attempt of the British Government to rush through the election of a King of the Romans without consulting Prussia.[3]

Quite apart from Hanoverian influences,[4] the British Government was in no conciliatory mood. Prussia was the intimate ally of Britain's arch-enemy, France, and acted as her agent in the Empire.[5] George II and Newcastle resented Prussia's refusal to abandon France and return to the old system.[6] Frederick kept alive this resentment by a series of actions, which bitterly offended the British Government, when he tried to establish commercial companies which would compete with British trading companies,[7] refused to pay the Silesian loan,[8]

[1] Full accounts of the negotiation in *O.S.*, ii, 39–57. Britain did not accede to the secret articles—*i.e.*, to the anti-Prussian core of the treaty.

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 183, 205, 215.

[3] ". . . On m'a négligé au point de ne pas me donner la moindre ouverture de l'affaire [King of the Romans], ni d'en toucher mot envers mon ministre le sieur de Klingräffen, tout comme si j'étais pour rien dans tout ceci." (*Pol. Corr.*, viii, 286, 2 March, 1751.)

[4] The purely Hanoverian-Prussian sources of friction were of old standing. Firstly, George II's suppression of George I's will, by which he was supposed to have left a legacy to the dowager queen of Prussia. (*Pol. Corr.*, i, 37, etc.) Secondly, the Prussian seizure of East Friesland in 1744, to which the House of Hanover had claims which it tried to assert in the imperial law courts. (*Preuss. Staats.*, ii, 382 ff.) Lastly, Hanover had occupied certain bailiwicks of Mecklenburg in contravention of Prussia's eventual claims to the duchy.

[5] Waddington, 418–9, 423–4.

[6] *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 562.

[7] Williams to Newcastle, *e.g.*, 3 October, 1750. *Cf.* Add. MSS. 32823, f. 212.

[8] Williams to Newcastle, 8 December ; Satow, 37–42. This loan had been originally advanced by English nationals to the Emperor Charles VI. When Maria Theresa ceded Silesia to Frederick at the Treaty of Breslau he promised to discharge the debt, but withheld the last instalment in retaliation for Britain's refusal to compensate his subjects for her seizure of their ships and cargoes during the Austrian succession war.

posed as a champion of Jacobitism,[1] and exulted in the failure of George II's attempt to bribe the Elector of Cologne.[2]

The relations of Britain and Prussia being in this condition, Frederick's treatment of Williams in the first weeks of his mission may be attributed to his habit of venting his spite against a foreign Power by neglecting and insulting its diplomatic representative at his court. Williams's position, therefore, was undoubtedly difficult; but the more difficult it was the more careful he ought to have been to avoid making it worse, especially as Prussia's ally France would readily seize any opportunity to intensify the friction between Britain and Prussia, while Britain's own allies, especially Saxony, were eager to involve her in their hostility to Prussia. Instead of proceeding with caution and reserve, Williams showed a complete lack of self-control. He flung himself headlong into the arms of Frederick II's *bête noire*, Gross, and together they followed a policy of espionage and intrigue. Worse still, Williams could not conceal the hurt inflicted on his vanity by the little notice which was taken of him at court. His pique led him to behave, according to his own confession, in a way entirely unsuited to his official position. To take one example, Williams mentions in his diary on 30 July that the Tartar envoy "in his dirty boots" was placed at the upper end of the table. Williams promptly seated himself at the foot, explaining in a loud voice that he did not wish to associate with *canaille*.

"The respect of the Prussian ministers to his Tartar Excellency," he continues,

> put me in mind of the ceremony of making a Mamamouchi in Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. I immediately communicated my thoughts to Count Puebla, who, in company with his neighbours, immediately burst out into a fit of laughter, which laughter according to the best of my observation made Count Podewils rather angry than merry to my no small satisfaction.

Williams's imprudence did not end even there, for there can be no doubt, in spite of his denials,[3] that he made grossly improper

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 26 December.
[2] Frederick II to Klingräffen (intercepted), 17 October, in Add. MSS. 32824, f. 149.
[3] Williams to Newcastle, 19, 26 December, 1750.

remarks about the court of Berlin and Frederick's government of Prussia.[1] In his official despatches, in order to pander to George II's hatred of his nephew, Williams lost no opportunity of representing the court and government of Frederick II in the worst light, although he took care not to overstep the bounds of diplomatic phraseology. His private correspondence[2] and the diary he kept at Berlin are much less reticent, and it is impossible to believe that Williams, in the galling position which he occupied at Berlin, would keep even the amount of control shown in his written comments over his spoken utterances. And the least slip of the tongue would be passed from mouth to mouth and magnified tenfold before it reached Frederick II, whose spies had been watching Williams almost from the beginning of his residence at Berlin.[3]

Williams's mission to Warsaw was the last straw. Frederick was fully justified in resenting[4] the despatch of Williams, within a few weeks of his arrival at Berlin, to the court of Prussia's bitterest enemy with express orders to oppose at Warsaw the envoy of the Prussian court, to which he remained accredited. Williams's activity there, on his own responsibility and without instructions, in discovering the real object of the Tartar's mission[5] and enlightening the Russian court (which might otherwise have been restrained in its preparations against Sweden by dread of an alliance of Prussia, Sweden, and Turkey)

[1] The most definite statement of Frederick's charges is given in his letter to Tyrconnell in *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 279: "Les raisons des plaintes que j'ai eues contre lui, sont de ce qu'il a tenu dans de grandes tables des propos injurieux contre mon gouvernement, le traitant de misérable et de ridicule, tournant tout du mauvais côté et ajoutant qu'il aimerait mieux être un singe de l'île de Bornéo que ministre prussien, ajoutant beaucoup d'autres indécences traitant le gouvernement de tyrannique et montrant partout de la mauvaise volonté contre ce qui regarde moi et mes intérêts." Puebla told Williams he was accused of saying that "a man might as well make his court to a parcel of hogs as to the court of Berlin." (*Berlin Journal*, 13 December.)

[2] See the extracts (undated) printed in Walpole, *George II*, i, 452–61: "His ministers at every court are the scum of the earth and have nothing but the insolence of their master to support them. . . . I think Hamlet says in the play 'Denmark is a prison'; the whole Prussian territory is so in the literal sense of the word."

[3] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 35.

[4] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 54. Frederick's resentment was the greater because he greatly exaggerated Williams's success at Warsaw. (*Pol. Corr.*, viii, 169, 252, 265; *cf.* A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 9.)

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 18 August, 1750.

gave Frederick II an additional grievance and turned his growing dislike and dissatisfaction into bitter enmity. Thereafter Williams's continuance at Berlin was plainly impracticable.

Indeed, Williams ought never to have been sent to Berlin, but the same influences which had secured him the appointment prevented him from being reprimanded for his outrageous conduct. The King's enmity to Frederick II grew daily stronger, and he was not sorry to break off diplomatic relations. Newcastle to some extent shared this resentment, and, moreover, did not wish to offend Fox by censuring his intimate friend. Thanks to these influences Williams's diplomatic career did not come to an untimely but well-merited end in February 1751. To avoid giving even the appearance of censure to his recall, Williams was sent straight from Berlin to Dresden to undertake the negotiation for securing the Saxon vote for the election of a King of the Romans.

CHAPTER V

DRESDEN: THE SUBSIDY TREATY OF 1751

Debates in the British Cabinet on peace subsidies—Brühl anxious to secure a subsidy from Britain—Failure of British attempts to secure the Saxon vote for the Archduke Joseph without a subsidy—Repudiation of the Treaty of Neuhaus by the Elector of Cologne—Division of opinion in the British Cabinet as to continuing the election negotiations—Newcastle sounds Saxony—Preliminary difficulties between Britain, the United Provinces, and Austria—Opening of negotiations at Dresden—Exorbitant demands of Saxony—Newcastle and Bentinck decide to continue the negotiations with Saxony—Bedford removed from the Cabinet by Newcastle's intrigues—Granville and Holderness enter the Cabinet as Newcastle's supporters—Flemming arrives in London with moderate demands from Brühl—Newcastle's conversion of the King and the Premier—Flemming's negotiations with the British Government—United Provinces approve the draft treaty drawn up at London—Brühl's tactics—Williams signs the treaty as altered by Brühl *sub spe rati*—Increased importance of the treaty in Newcastle's view—Williams's signature causes further conflict in the Cabinet—Victory of Newcastle—His instructions to Williams—Williams secures a compromise acceptable to the British Government—Reasons for Brühl's acceptance of British demands—His relations with France—Satisfaction of Newcastle and the Dutch ministers with the treaty—Dissatisfaction of Pelham—Debate on the treaty in Parliament.

FORESEEING the difficulties which the restoration of peace would place in the way of the renewal of his subsidy treaty with France, Brühl, ever since the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, had been paving the way for the revival of his former subsidy treaty with Britain. In this task he was greatly assisted by Count Flemming,[1] the able Saxon minister at London, who stood on particularly good terms with Newcastle and was believed by Newcastle's colleagues to exercise an undue influence over the British Foreign Secretary.

By the summer of 1749 Newcastle had reluctantly reached the conclusion that the old system could not be maintained without

[1] W. Bentinck describes him as " un homme très pénétrant, d'un sens fort droit, qui quoique ministre de Saxe pense comme un homme totalement indépendant ; il a la confiance du Roi et des Ministres, surtout du Duc de Newcastle " (quoted by Beer in *Archiv. für Oester. Gesch.*, 46, p. 394. At Dresden, however, he was called " Flemming l'Anglois." (Williams to Newcastle (private), 3 July, in Add. MSS. 32837, f. 278.)

paying subsidies to certain Continental states. Pelham—a zealous advocate of peace and retrenchment—was intent on reducing the debt charge and had no eyes for the Continent. Like his predecessor, Walpole, he was content to leave foreign policy to his brother—provided no additional demands were made on the Treasury. Hardwicke, the third member of the triumvirate, took more interest in foreign affairs than Pelham; but his legal mind and insular outlook left him at a disadvantage in the world of high diplomacy, although he showed on many concrete points the shrewd common sense which distinguished him in home affairs. Pelham and Hardwicke remained unconvinced by Newcastle's arguments, and Newcastle was compelled on 14 November, 1749, to tell Flemming that no subsidy, nor even assurances of subsidies for the future, could be given.[1]

The struggle in the Cabinet on the question of subsidy treaties continued throughout the winter (1749–50). Finally, in the spring of 1750 Newcastle won a victory in principle, but Pelham and Hardwicke would only give subsidies sufficient to bribe one German elector. In spite of Brühl's enlistment of Russian support of Saxon claims,[2] the preference was given to Bavaria, which as the traditional ally of France had been of great assistance to her in her campaigns in Germany, both in the Spanish and the Austrian succession wars. Bavaria would therefore be a notable acquisition to the old system; Saxony was already part of the old system, but its policy was unreliable and its finances in disorder. The British Government feared also that the Parliamentary Opposition would attack a subsidy treaty made with Saxony on the ground that it was concluded to enable Saxony to pay the interest on George II's private loans to the Elector of Saxony.[3] Brühl and Flemming were naturally offended at this preference of Bavaria, but were not discouraged. Saxony

[1] S.P.F., Foreign Ministers, 36.

[2] Holderness to Keith, 27 February, N.S., 1750 : " Czernichew has orders to press our court to grant a very considerable subsidy to that of Dresden : sure they imagine guineas grow in our streets," in Add. MSS. 35468, f. 40. *Cf.* Sternberg to Bernes (intercepted), in *Pol. Corr.*, vii, 208 ; Newcastle to Guy Dickens, 22 December, O.S., in Add. MSS. 35467, f. 173b.

[3] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 2/13 September, 1749, in Add. MSS. 35410, f. 140 ; Pelham to Newcastle, 26 April, O.S., 1750, in Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 335, etc.

had gone, in 1746–50, as far as she possibly could to meet the wishes of France, but France had remained dissatisfied. Saxe and Issarts had alike failed to secure the renewal of the subsidy treaty, and Saxe's death on 30 November, 1750, notably weakened Saxon influence at Versailles.[1] Brühl therefore promised Williams that he would not renew the subsidy treaty with France, and actually sent instructions in this sense to his minister at Versailles.[2] This was no sacrifice, since France had refused his overtures, partly on the ground of her financial embarrassments, but chiefly because Brühl was devoted to the enemies of France and she believed that it was impossible to change him.[3]

Promises, however, sat lightly on Brühl, and within a few weeks the Saxon minister at Versailles was inviting French proposals for a renewal of the treaty of subsidies,[4] but the conditions attached by France, especially co-operation with her in the Empire and the giving of offices to the French party in Poland, were unacceptable to Brühl. Nevertheless he continued to negotiate with France until the actual ratification of the subsidy treaty with Britain, in order to extort better terms from Britain, and at the same time to keep open a line of retreat should his negotiation with the Maritime Powers miscarry.[5]

When late in 1750 the Elector of Cologne showed signs that he would not accept Newcastle's interpretation[6] of the subsidy treaty of February 1750 between Cologne, Hanover, and the United Provinces, it became practically certain that Britain, if she persevered in the election, would have to buy the Saxon and Palatine as well as the Bavarian vote.[7] Newcastle had at first

[1] A.E. Saxe, Supplément 2, especially ff. 174, 178; *Pol. Corr.*, vii, 220; Böttiger, ii, 455.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 26 September.

[3] A.E. Saxe, Supplément 2, ff. 162, 168.

[4] Williams to Newcastle, 2 January, 1751; *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 169, 171. *Cf.* despatch to Boyer, 15 February, 1751, in A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 58: "Le Roi fait un cas infini de l'amitié du Roi de Pologne mais sa M^té croit en même temps qu'elle lui est due . . . et qu'elle ne doit pas toujours la payer surtout quand la sienne et son alliance peuvent être à chaque instant de la plus grande utilité à sa M^té Polonaise et contenir ceux qui voudroient l'inquiéter injustement."

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 21, 28 March; Yorke to Holderness, 4/15 September, in S.P.F., France, 241; A.E. Saxe, 41: Boyer's despatches of 27 January, 7 February, etc.

[6] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 11/22 July, 1750, in Add. MSS. 35410, f. 273.

[7] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 26 September/7 October, 1750, in Yorke, ii, 26.

tried to secure the Saxon vote by the exertion of Austrian [1] and Russian [2] influence at the Saxon court, but already he intended to offer the Hanoverian and Dutch subsidies, if they were rejected by Cologne, either to Saxony or to the Palatinate.[3]

Brühl at last saw his object within his grasp, and hastened to cultivate the good disposition of the Maritime Powers by giving a favourable, although non-committal, reply [4] to the Emperor's request for the Saxon vote for the eldest Archduke. Disputes between George II and the Elector of Saxony, over repayment of George II's loans and the conditions on which Saxony might obtain another loan, disturbed the harmony between Britain and Saxony,[5] but this source of friction was soon removed by a settlement which satisfied both courts.[6] The terms were so favourable to George II that Frederick II had believed that Saxony would never accept them. This complaisance on Brühl's part would go far towards removing George II's disinclination to have anything to do with Saxony,[7] which Newcastle had noted in the autumn of 1749, and which had doubtless contributed to the British Government's choice of Bavaria as the first object of their bounty. Flemming took the opportunity to urge over again the old arguments for giving a subsidy to Saxony.[8] Newcastle's vague reply,[9] he complained, was "too mysterious and too obscure," and on 9 March he wrote again to Newcastle pressing for definite assurances of subsidies.[10] If these were not forthcoming Saxony would be forced to return at once to the French alliance.

[1] Newcastle to Keith, 21 July/1 August, 15/26 September, 1750, 11/22 September and 14/25 December, 1751, in Add. MSS. 35469, ff. 109, 229, 32823, f. 268, and 32825, f. 230 respectively.

[2] Newcastle to Dickens, especially 30 November and 14 December, O.S., 1750, in S.P.F., Russia ; A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 66 : Boyer's despatch, 24 February, 1751.

[3] Newcastle to C. Bentinck, 19/30 September, 1750, in Add. MSS. 32824, f. 25 ; Pelham to Newcastle, 5/16 October, in Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 399.

[4] Arneth, iv, 297.

[5] Add. MSS. 32824, f. 308 ; *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 180, 297.

[6] Flemming to Newcastle, 26 November, in Add. MSS. 32825, f. 69 ; *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 159, 180 ; A.E. Saxe, 41, ff. 6 and 18.

[7] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 2/13 September, 1749, in Add. MSS. 35410, f. 140.

[8] Flemming to Newcastle, 28 December, in Add. MSS. 32825, f. 253.

[9] 4/15 January, in Add. MSS. 32826, f. 17.

[10] Flemming to Newcastle, 9 March, in Add. MSS. 32826, f. 325.

At this point Williams arrived to take up his old post at Dresden, after shaking the ungrateful dust of Berlin from his feet. The disservice he had rendered to Prusso-British friendship made him more popular than ever at Dresden;[1] and, despite his failure at Berlin, he still enjoyed the confidence of Newcastle. Before leaving Berlin Williams received the usual formal instructions, his real instructions being in the form of a 'secret' letter.[2] He was to obtain the Saxon vote for the Archduke Joseph by the offer to use British influence at Vienna to secure a double marriage of the Austrian and Saxon Houses,[3] by a less definite promise to support the Saxon candidate for the Polish throne at the next vacancy, and by an offer of good offices at Vienna to procure "any little practicable *douceurs*" for Saxony. Newcastle was encouraged to hope that the Saxon vote might be had without a subsidy by misleading despatches from Guy Dickens at Petersburg[4] to the effect that Saxony had promised the Empress of Russia to give her vote without subsidies. Williams was therefore to stir up Keyserling (and also Sternberg) to further exertions at Dresden. Finally, should these offers fail, the British Government, for the first time in the official correspondence, accepted in principle the Saxon demand for a subsidy in the almost certain contingency of the Treaty of Neuhaus with Cologne being repudiated. It was obviously a delicate matter to inform Saxony that, if another prince finally rejected George II's subsidies, then, and not till then, they would be offered to her. Newcastle, therefore, left it to Williams's discretion either to make use of this information or to keep it to himself.

Within a few days of his arrival at Dresden Williams was convinced that the exertion of Russian and Austrian influence

[1] A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 84: Boyer's despatch, 3 March. His failure at Berlin also made him a favourite at Vienna. Keith to Williams, 24 February, N.S., in Add. MSS. 35492, f. 48: "You are considered at this court as a sort of martyr for the common cause and the Empress herself spoke of you the other day at my audience in the most obliging and gracious terms."

[2] Newcastle to Williams, 8/19 February.

[3] This scheme had been mooted by Flemming in the autumn of 1750. (Flemming to Newcastle, 28 December, in Add. MSS. 32825, f. 253.)

[4] S.P.F., Russia, 56, especially Dickens's despatch of 5 March, O.S. Saxony made certain of Russian support against Britain by making a British subsidy a condition of her accession to the Treaty of the Two Empresses (Böttiger, ii, 455), and all Newcastle's endeavours (Newcastle to Dickens (secret), 5 July, O.S.) to make Bestuzhev change his mind were fruitless.

to secure the Saxon vote was a "broken reed."[1] Keyserling and Sternberg both insisted that only a subsidy from Britain could gain the Saxon vote and bring Saxony back completely into the old system. Williams's first conference with Brühl was equally unsatisfactory. The Saxon minister was profuse in assurances of Saxony's desire "to throw itself into the arms of the King [of Great Britain]," but the internal condition of Saxony, and still more the insatiable demands of Prussia on the *Steuer*, forced him to demand subsidies; if these were not forthcoming from Britain Saxony must accept French offers, especially as the conditions attached to these could give no offence to Saxony's old allies. When Williams asked how Russia would regard a renewal of the Saxon *rapprochement* with France in the midst of the Northern crisis Brühl pointed out that Russia and also Austria were supporting Saxon claims to a British subsidy and would be offended by Britain's refusal. If Britain would give a subsidy it would be used to form a camp of 20,000 men,[2] which would strengthen the prestige of the allies in the Empire. Williams drew the correct conclusion from the interview:

> I cannot believe that with such good dispositions on the one side, and the fear of losing the friendship of Russia on the other, [Saxony] will ever be brought to enter into a new subsidy treaty with France, though it is impossible to be answerable that Count Brühl will not in some immediate distress for money sign a treaty with France in a moment.

Brühl, therefore, held the whip hand, and as the negotiations proceeded the "good dispositions" of Saxony tended to recede into the background, while the threat of a Franco-Saxon treaty was more and more nakedly revealed.

The final repudiation of the Treaty of Neuhaus[3] made it possible for the British Government to transfer the "leavings of the Elector of Cologne"[4] either to Saxony or to the Palatinate. Some ministers, both in Britain and the United Provinces, were inclined to drop the election of the King of the Romans

[1] Williams to Keith, 5 April, in Add. MSS. 35471, f. 7.
[2] On these chimerical Saxon projects cf. *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 329–30.
[3] Newcastle to Williams, 29 March/9 April; Holderness to Newcastle, 2 April, in Add. MSS. 32827, f. 126.
[4] Williams to Newcastle, 6 April.

and with it the whole policy of subsidy treaties. But the prevailing feeling was that of W. Bentinck, the most influential Dutch minister: "How [the election negotiation] will end God knows. But it is gone too far to be dropped. I don't like the present appearance, but it must not be made worse by letting it fall."[1] This feeling was strengthened by the insolent Prussian memorial of January 1750.[2] As between Saxony and the Palatinate the weight of opinion in the British Cabinet was at first in favour of the Palatinate, but ultimately Saxony secured the preference. "L'on penchoit ici pour traiter avec le Palatine," Richecourt reported, "et les avis étoient réunis là-dessus. Mais je crois qu'on penchera maintenant vers la Saxe. Si l'on convient avec elle, on aura ensuite à meilleur marché le Palatine si on peut l'avoir."[3] This inclination was confirmed by the influence of W. Bentinck, who wrote to Newcastle:[4]

> Elsacher said to me he had heard that there was now an inclination or disposition in England to repair the loss of Cologne by regaining the Elector Palatine. At present that the Prince of Orange has determined his thoughts upon Saxony and has secured into his way of thinking those he most wants to carry the thing through I hope nothing will be started that can any way thwart this measure . . . besides that it would most certainly put everything back and damp the present spirit consider that the pretensions of the Palatinate are such that proposing to negotiate on them is enough to start insuperable difficulties. . . . Pray then, my lord, let us drive the nail that will go: and stick to Saxony . . . our *liaisons* with Saxony will certainly be very agreeable to Russia.

The participation of the United Provinces in the new subsidy was essential,[5] and on 20 April Newcastle asked Holderness to inform the Dutch ministers that he was making preliminary

[1] W. Bentinck to Keith, 26 January, N.S., in Add. MSS. 35470, f. 153.

[2] *Supra*, Chapter IV, p. 62. "Whatever party [the King of Prussia] may have had in England (and he certainly had one in opposition to the Duke of Newcastle's measures more than from any other reason), he himself has broke their backs." (W. Bentinck to Keith, 26 January, N.S., in Add. MSS. 35470, f. 153.)

[3] Richecourt to Kaunitz, 29 March/9 April, in Add. MSS. 32827, f. 156.

[4] W. Bentinck to Newcastle, 13 April, in Add. MSS. 32827, f. 175.

[5] See Newcastle to Holderness correspondence in S.P.F., Holland (April), and their private letters in Add. MSS. 32827, ff. 126, 139, 150, 177, 187.

enquiries as to the practicability of a subsidy treaty with Saxony.

At the outset two difficulties stood in the way: (1) the Treaty of Neuhaus had been concluded by George II in his electoral capacity, and both King and ministers insisted that the projected treaty with Saxony should be on the same footing.[1] The Dutch absolutely refused to take any part in the proposed negotiations unless in conjunction with the King of Great Britain.[2] (2) What share of the proposed subsidy was to be paid by the United Provinces? "His Majesty," Newcastle wrote,[3]

> will certainly as Elector not exceed the sum he gave to Cologne, so that if the King of Poland insists upon the same subsidy, vizt: £40,000, the fourth part must be made up either by the Republic paying the same proportion as Hanover, or by the court of Vienna's contributing one-fourth as they did to Bavaria.

The Dutch ministers decisively rejected the suggestion that they should contribute one-half of the subsidy,[4] and the court of Vienna also lost no time in refusing to pay the quarter share proposed by Newcastle.[5]

Meantime Williams had learned from Holderness that the Elector of Cologne had signed a treaty with France. He immediately went to Brühl and held out the prospect of a subsidy in the hope of concealing that the subsidy which he assumed would now be offered to Saxony was the "leavings of the Elector of Cologne."[6] This manœuvre shows tact and ability to appreciate the Saxon point of view, but Brühl discovered a few hours later that Cologne had slipped out of the hands of the Maritime Powers and naturally decided to raise

[1] Newcastle to Holderness (private), 9 April, O.S.; Newcastle to Williams (very secret), 12 April, O.S.

[2] Holderness to Newcastle, 27, 30 April, in Add. MSS. 32827, ff. 259, 267; W. Bentinck to Newcastle, 30 April, f. 274: "The Republic will readily engage in measures (necessary for the maintaining of the liberties of Europe, etc.) with the Crown of Great Britain because the risk . . . would be shared by England . . . the Republic, though glad to have the additional weight of the electorate, will not engage with the electorate alone." *Cf.* Bentinck's journal in Egerton MSS. 1732, 13/24 May, and also at f. 129.

[3] Newcastle to Holderness (private), in Add. MSS. 32827, f. 205.

[4] Holderness to Newcastle, 23 April, in Add. MSS. 32827, f. 237.

[5] Keith to Williams, 10 May, in Add. MSS. 35492, f. 53b.

[6] Saxon sensitiveness on this point was later increased by Prussian insinuations. (*Pol. Corr.*, viii, 352.)

his price. When on 2 May Williams received Newcastle's "very secret" letter of 12/23 April authorising him to sound Brühl he found that his adroitness had availed him nothing.

The first point on which Newcastle insisted was that the treaty must be with George II as Elector. Secondly, Williams must find out the minimum which Saxony would accept by way of subsidy. George II would not contribute more than 100,000 German crowns, and Newcastle suggested that Saxony should be satisfied with three-quarters of the Cologne subsidy of 200,000 crowns, unless Holland and Austria would make up the deficiency. "You will from hence," Newcastle added, "see that your business at present is only to learn; to engage for nothing, but give reason to hope that a satisfactory answer upon these points might produce a good effect." Finally, Newcastle communicated to Williams further details of Conti's schemes to secure the succession in Poland [1] in the hope of facilitating the conclusion of the treaty by arousing Brühl's suspicions of France.

Brühl must have been delighted when Williams's overtures showed that the British Government was at last coming to the scratch, but he allowed no sign of his jubilation to appear. The matter, he told Williams, was so important that it must be referred to the Privy Council [2]—Brühl's favourite device to drag out a negotiation. Nevertheless he hastened to despatch Flemming to his old post at London [3] in order to influence Newcastle and to study *le dessous des cartes*.

Williams extracted from Brühl a clear and prompt but not over-satisfactory answer [4] to Newcastle's questions. Brühl stipulated that the proposed treaty must be made between the King of Great Britain and the King of Poland as Elector of Saxony; that it must be purely defensive, with the object of preserving the tranquillity of the Empire; and that it must contain a guarantee of Saxony's territory and security. Finally, Brühl, hinting that Britain had never, under the terms of the

[1] The information came originally from Vienna (Keith to Newcastle (very secret), 13 February, O.S., 6 April, O.S., 1750, in Add. MSS. 35468, ff. 35, 197); *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 387, gives the usual distorted account of Williams's action.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 5 May.

[3] *Ibid.*, 10 May.

[4] Dated 13 May, in S.P.F., Poland.

Treaty of Warsaw, compensated Saxony for the damage done by the Prussian invasion of Saxony in 1745, demanded a subsidy of £60,000 per annum for six years.[1] This was practically twice the sum offered by Newcastle, and considerably more than France was offering to Saxony, although Brühl had repeatedly assured Williams that he would rather take a smaller subsidy from Britain than a larger from France. Brühl now denied that he had made any such statement.

These exorbitant demands are plainly due in some part to Saxon pride. Saxony regarded herself among the German states as second in dignity to Austria alone, and it was ridiculous to expect her to take a lesser subsidy than had been offered to Cologne. Moreover, Brühl was well aware that after the defection of Cologne he was Newcastle's best, if not only, chance of carrying the election, and he was determined to press this advantage to the uttermost. Newcastle was disgusted at his "very extravagant demands," [2] but was encouraged by the news that Flemming was returning to London, by Williams's assurances that Flemming's instructions would be more moderate than Brühl's first demands,[3] and by a despatch from Keith, the British minister at Vienna, in which he expressed the opinion that the Austrian court might after all be persuaded to contribute to the subsidy.[4] Newcastle was satisfied that the British negotiations would prevent the conclusion of a Franco-Saxon subsidy treaty in the meantime, but the repeated postponements of Flemming's departure for England soon made him suspicious.[5] He had never been very hopeful of success at Dresden,[6] and, after consulting W. Bentinck, who was on a visit to England, he wrote to Keith [7] to propose that Austria, in order to keep the

[1] Frederick believed that Saxony demanded £100,000 (*Pol. Corr.*, viii, 378), and thought the subsidy actually accepted by Saxony miserably small (*ibid.*, viii, 429).

[2] Newcastle to Keith, in S.P.F., Germany (Empire), 10 May, O.S. *Cf.* Newcastle to Williams, 10 May, O.S.

[3] Williams to Newcastle, 14, 19 May.

[4] Newcastle to Keith, 31 May, O.S. (very secret), in Add. MSS. 32828, f. 61.

[5] Newcastle to Williams, 31 May, O.S.; Newcastle to Dickens, 5 July, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32828, f. 179.

[6] Newcastle to Holderness, 9 April, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32827, f. 205: "Upon the whole I think we shall begin the negotiation and that will have its effect whether it shall ultimately succeed or not."

[7] 31 May, O.S. (very secret), in Add. MSS. 32828, f. 61.

affair of the election active, should start negotiations with the Elector Palatine and try to reach a compromise with him on his territorial and pecuniary claims against her, which had been put forward at Aix-la-Chapelle and had even been included in the preliminaries. "Examination of pretensions," he wrote, "can do no harm and may do good, and the more unjustifiable these pretensions are the less inconvenience can arise to the court of Vienna from their examination." If Brühl could choose between Britain and France Newcastle hoped to be able to choose between Saxony and the Palatinate. But Austria's response [1] to Newcastle's despatch of 31 May was not encouraging, and no serious negotiation with the Palatinate resulted.

Meantime Newcastle and Bentinck discussed the general situation,[2] and decided definitely to go ahead with the Saxon negotiation. Bentinck insisted once again that the treaty must be made by Great Britain; and the King, when Newcastle broached the subject to him, would not hear of giving subsidies in his electoral capacity to any German state except Cologne, in which he had a special interest owing to his desire to secure the election of his favourite son, the Duke of Cumberland, to the coadjutorship. It therefore became necessary to extort the consent of Newcastle's colleagues, and especially of Pelham, to a second British subsidy in order to carry the election. In the Parliamentary debates on the Bavarian treaty Pelham had virtually promised [3] that it would be the only one, and it was the more difficult to go back on this promise because the defection of Cologne had partially destroyed the popularity of the election.

> Now that Cologne had been lost, they [the ministers] mocked at everything that had been done, saying that whatever was done in Germany was simply flinging money away because France would offer more money and traverse the British negotiation.[4]

The first step towards securing the adoption of the Newcastle-Bentinck programme was to get rid of Bedford,[5] the Secretary

[1] Dated 24 June, in S.P.F., Germany (Empire). *Cf.* Bartenstein's remarks quoted in *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 371, 374.

[2] See Bentinck's journal in Egerton MSS. 1732, especially 13/24 May.

[3] Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 208.

[4] Bentinck's journal (Egerton MSS. 1732), 13/24 May, 1751.

[5] On the whole course of this protracted intrigue see Walpole, *George II*, 185–94; Yorke, ii, 40–2 (and relative correspondence); *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 348–9, 364–6, 396, 401, 406.

of State for the Southern Department, a staunch "little Englander" and long a thorn in Newcastle's delicate side. Pelham was averse to alienating one of the greatest Whig landowners, and the King refused to dismiss him.[1] But the death of the Prince of Wales destroyed the kernel of the Parliamentary opposition, and made the Bedfordites in opposition comparatively harmless. At last on 13 June Bedford's ally, Sandwich, was dismissed from the Admiralty. Bedford's resignation followed next day, and was accepted with some reluctance by the King, who showed his dissatisfaction with Newcastle by refusing to speak to him for over a month.[2] Newcastle, however, consolidated his victory by securing the admission to the Cabinet, as Lord President of the Council, of Lord Granville, carefully chosen [3] to support Newcastle's meddlesome Continental policy, and of Holderness as Secretary of State for the Southern Department, a creature of Newcastle's, who would prove a useful subordinate in carrying out this policy.[4] Newcastle had already begun the conversion of the Lord Chancellor, and was powerfully assisted by Bentinck,[5] whom Hardwicke did not wish to offend when the sending of his son Joseph Yorke to the Hague was under discussion.[6] The British Government now began to consider the treaty with Saxony seriously, and Guy Dickens, the British minister at Petersburg, was ordered to secure effective Russian intervention to lessen Saxon demands.[7] This was the more necessary because Austria finally refused to make any contribution to the purchase of the Saxon vote.[8]

Newcastle's suspicions of Saxony's double dealing,[9] naturally increased by the visit to Dresden of a former French agent at Warsaw, Durand, and by the approaching return of Loss to Versailles, were temporarily removed by Flemming's arrival in London at the beginning of August. Flemming immediately

[1] Yorke, ii, 40.
[2] *Bedford Correspondence*, ii, 96. *Cf.* Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 401–2.
[3] Bentinck's journal, Egerton MSS. 1732, f. 120. *Cf.* Yorke, ii, 42, 101.
[4] Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 387.
[5] Newcastle to Holderness, 9 July, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32828, f. 210.
[6] Egerton MSS. 1732, f. 123b.
[7] Newcastle to Dickens, 5 July, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32828, f. 179.
[8] Keith to Newcastle (private), 19 July, in Add. MSS. 32828, f. 204.
[9] Newcastle to Williams, 16 July, O.S.

submitted Saxony's demands to Newcastle,[1] who found them not unacceptable as a basis of negotiation.[2] They were identical with the forecast made by Williams at the beginning of June—a subsidy of £50,000 per annum for six years and a British guarantee of the hereditary dominions of the Saxon House. In exchange the Elector would give his vote for the Archduke and promise to accede to the Treaty of the Two Empresses if "no new and onerous obligations" were required of him and the imperial courts guaranteed him against any damage "en haine de cette accession."

Newcastle had already secured the approval of the leading ministers except Pelham, and even he, although averse, had not actually refused to acquiesce.[3] On 7 August Pelham's conversion was carried a stage further by Newcastle, supported by "Mylord Granville, who behaved very well," with the result that when Flemming's memorial was communicated to him "he gave more into it or opposed it less than we could imagine."[4] In great glee Newcastle went to court, where he had hardly dared to show himself since Bedford's retiral, and "was the first spoke to at the levee, although the Duke of Bedford was there and was most graciously spoke to afterwards."

"When I came into the closet," Newcastle continues,

> I told the King that I had something to lay before him that I hoped would be to his satisfaction, that I had had a great deal of discourse with Count Flemming whom I found very reasonable. That I had also had some discourse with my brother and then I said no more but produced Flemming's paper and explained it. His Majesty seemed pleased but wanted the court of Vienna to contribute,[5] which I said was impossible. That whatever we did with Saxony required the utmost despatch, as Count Loss had returned to Paris, and if the Dauphine had a son she would be able

[1] Newcastle to Williams, 26 July, O.S. Flemming's memorial is in S.P.F., Foreign Ministers, 46.

[2] Holderness to W. Bentinck, 26 July, O.S.: "Flemming is still pretty high in his demands, but I think there is all imaginable reason to believe that the affair will end well."

[3] "He seemed to think Saxony an immaterial object." Newcastle to Hardwicke, 27 July, O.S., in Add. MSS. 35411, f. 291.

[4] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 27 July, O.S., in Add. MSS. 35411, f. 291.

[5] Newcastle accordingly wrote (2 August, O.S.) to Keith (in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 15b), representing the negotiation as on the verge of a rupture unless the court of Vienna would contribute.

to procure any conditions from France for the King her father. This made an impression. I said that I found my brother less objective than I expected; that he thought this an immaterial object, but that he had seemed disposed even to give a subsidy to Russia if we could make a grand alliance with Spain, which would really curb France, and I extolled my brother's noble way of talking on that subject as indeed it deserved. I did not intend to mention my Lord Granville but the King of himself immediately said this is the effect of Granville's coming in. He supports you or your way of thinking, with something like a hint as if I wanted that support before and that this had produced the alteration. I then thought it proper to own to the King (*in confidence*) that I had desired Ld. Gr[anville] to talk to my brother. I am sure I was right for that shewed it to be in concert with me. The King seemed highly pleased the whole time. I then in my free way (a stile I have not lately used) said if your Majesty would tell my B[rother] you think this treaty with Saxony *useful* and *necessary* I realy (*sic*) think my B[rother] would agree to it. The King answered I can't go so far at first: I must first see what abatements Flemming will make and reduce the sum to German crowns. I have sent to Flemming for that purpose but I despair of his going lower than 47,500 pds for four years only. Upon the whole I never saw such change of behavior in my life. . . . I went afterwards to the Lady [Yarmouth] to whom in general I communicated what had passed and shewed great satisfaction at ye appearance of success in our great foreign negotiations. She seemed in high good humour [and assured Newcastle that the King was *fort content*, remarking] " vous avez beau jeu tant dedans que dehors." I said " Oui, si le roi est content." . . . This is the substance of the whole. Business has done the whole and business must preserve it.

Pelham's conversion was presumably completed[1] on the following Tuesday when Hardwicke, Pelham, and Newcastle dined without other company, and the approval of the Council later in the evening would be a mere formality when the leading ministers were in agreement. Although the *quantum* and duration of the subsidy still remained to be definitely fixed, Saxon demands and British offers were near enough for Newcastle and his secretaries to draw up a draft treaty on the model of the

[1] It was never more than " bare acquiescence and not a conviction as to the utility of the measure." (Newcastle to W. Bentinck, 2 August, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 46.)

Bavarian treaty of subsidies,[1] along with a secret declaration regarding the Saxon vote. The gravest obstacle to agreement was that Flemming was "expressly ordered by his Court not to engage for any troops whatever, lest it should draw on him [Saxony] the resentment of Prussia," and Newcastle adds "and I suppose of France."[1] As it was impossible to announce publicly the real reason why Britain was bribing Saxony, this would remove the sole justification of the treaty which the ministers could give to the House of Commons. Another difficulty was George II's insistence on Saxon reciprocity for the proposed British guarantee of the hereditary Saxon dominions, which Flemming could not accept. Flemming objected also that the draft treaty contained no " acknowledgment " from the court of Vienna for the Saxon vote, and on 18 August in a formal Note handed to Newcastle he asked for a promise that British influence would be exerted at Vienna to secure the coveted double marriage, or, failing that, some other *convenance*. Newcastle accepted[2] the Note on the express condition[3] that the proposed treaty was not to depend in any way for its validity on the success of these representations at Vienna. Things were now far enough advanced for the draft treaty to be communicated to the Dutch ministers and sent on to Williams with instructions to try and reach a settlement with the Saxon court on the outstanding differences.

Newcastle was in high spirits—bubbling over with generous self-congratulation and naïvely wondering how he had managed to do so much in so short a time.

> To have been able to suppress the very mention of concluding this treaty in the electoral capacity: not to have said one word to you [Holland] to exceed the proportion of one third nor to the court

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[1] Newcastle to W. Bentinck (very secret), 2 August, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 55 (printed in *Archives*, ii, 152–6).

[2] He had already (2 August, O.S.) sent " measured orders " to Keith (Add. MSS. 32829, f. 15b). Newcastle himself was favourable to the proposal since it would make " a consistent system in the Empire " (Newcastle to W. Bentinck in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 113, 9 August (very private)), but he adds : " The King (*entre nous*) isn't much for it ".

[3] Written (in French) on the margin of Flemming's note. *Cf.* Newcastle to Williams, 9 August, O.S.

of Vienna to contribute one quarter and yet to have agreed with Count Flemming both as to the *quantum* and *duration*—and this all to be negotiated and sent away in less than three weeks would be a surprise to those who know how we thought here upon these subjects: and be thought some merit in those who have had the principal if not the sole hand in doing it. . . . If the King will support me here and my allies not be vexatious . . . I will venture to answer that in time [and perhaps soon] we will still have some ground to stand upon on the Continent.

The Prince of Orange and W. Bentinck were less optimistic than Newcastle, but equally impressed by the necessity (for the Maritime Powers) of concluding the proposed treaty.[1] They had been the first to propose the election of the Archduke Joseph;[2] they had likewise been at the beginning advocates of the subsidy treaty with Saxony; their objections as to the form of the treaty at first proposed by Newcastle had been removed, and their share in the subsidy had been satisfactorily adjusted. On this question, therefore, the Maritime Powers were in complete agreement—an increasingly rare phenomenon. Newcastle's draft was approved,[3] and full powers to conclude the treaty sent to Calkoen, the Dutch minister at Dresden.[4]

The Saxon tactics are unmistakable. Flemming's mission to London was designed to delay matters, when every week's delay made it more essential for Newcastle, if he was to keep the election negotiation alive at all, to secure the Saxon vote. Secondly, by giving his personal approval to Newcastle's demands and still leaving his Government uncommitted, Flemming was to involve Newcastle so deeply in the subsidy negotiation that Newcastle's withdrawal would destroy Britain's credit on the Continent, already gravely impaired by the success of France in the subsidy competition with Britain which Newcastle's policy had inaugurated.

[1] W. Bentinck to Newcastle, 19 August—before he had received the draft treaty—in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 94.

[2] *English Historical Review*, xlii, 364; cf. *Archives*, ii, 101: "J'ai été le premier, déjà dès l'an 1747 à proposer . . . qu'on songeait une fois sérieusement [à l'élection]." (Prince of Orange to W. Bentinck, 24 May, 1750.)

[3] Fagel to Newcastle, 23 August, in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 135.

[4] *Ibid.*; W. Bentinck to Newcastle, 27 August, in *Archives*, ii, 160.

"The negotiation," W. Bentinck wrote,[1]

> must go on and must now be speedily perfected *quovis modo* for if, after our misfortune with Cologne, we should happen to lose or not gain Saxony, upon my word we are all prostituted and lost for ever and we shall be ridiculed abroad and at home.

Lastly, Brühl adroitly made certain that the final settlement would take place at Dresden.[2] Williams, driven by the exhortations of Newcastle and by his own vanity to conclude the treaty without further delay, and dreading that Brühl might conclude with France if he proved obstinate on the outstanding questions, would be at a fatal disadvantage in negotiating. Brühl's handling of this threat was masterly. If Williams touched on his relations with France he, with every appearance of candour, told Williams that France was making good offers, but that he would not accept them, although the Privy Council was in favour of them. Brühl, with his richly deserved reputation for duplicity, knew well that the best way to mystify Williams was to tell the truth, while encouraging Williams's suspicions of his veracity by the appearance of a negotiation with France.[3]

Thus when the scene shifted to Dresden and Williams posed in the limelight for a brief hour Brühl played the leading *rôle*, Williams that of "brilliant second."[4] His instructions were in general to secure a settlement in favour of Britain on the vital questions left unsettled by Newcastle and Flemming, although Flemming on practically every point had professed that he was convinced by Newcastle's arguments and had thus induced Newcastle to count much too confidently on success.

The first question was the *quantum* of the subsidy. Newcastle

[1] W. Bentinck to Newcastle, 19 August, N.S., in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 94.

[2] Flemming, in addition to the impracticable nature of his instructions, was not given a full power. *Cf.* Newcastle to W. Bentinck (very secret), 2 August, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 55.

[3] The return of Loss to his old post at Versailles (Williams to Newcastle 1 August; Yorke to Holderness, 4/15 September (1), S.P.F., France, 241) and the particular audience openly accorded at Dresden to Durand (Williams to Newcastle, 11 August; A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 307, f. 336).

[4] Calkoen was content to follow Williams's energetic lead (Calkoen to Fagel, 14 November, 1751, in Add. MSS. 15872, f. 295; A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 292: Boyer's despatch of 23 July), and was therefore *persona grata* to Williams. He was personally interested in the conclusion of the treaty of subsidies as he had bought a large amount of *Steuer* bills, towards the payment of which part of the subsidy would be applied. (A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 139: Boyer's despatch of 7 April.)

offered either £45,000 for four years or (preferably) £40,000 for six years in place of £48,000 for four years, which was Flemming's minimum and which Williams was finally to accept if necessary. As to the time of the payments, Williams must get rid of the stipulation of six months in advance, since no money could be paid until the treaty had been sanctioned by Parliament. Secondly, Newcastle insisted upon a clause placing a corps of Saxon troops at the disposal of the Maritime Powers in the event of war; preferably, as was the case in the Bavarian treaty, even if Britain were the aggressor, or in a modified form if Saxon fears of Prussian resentment made this unacceptable. Thirdly, Newcastle absolutely rejected the demand for a guarantee of the Saxon dominions, offering in its place an emphatic promise "to use their [the Maritime Powers'] utmost endeavours to procure satisfaction for any damage or injury done on account of this treaty . . . by any Power or *on any pretence whatsoever*." [1] Fourthly, the Saxon vote, which was not mentioned in the treaty, was to be secured by a "secret declaration" by the Elector. Newcastle also attempted to introduce into this proposed declaration an entirely irrelevant section [2] by which Saxony was to promise formally to accede "on the foot of former engagements" to the body of the Treaty of the Two Empresses as Britain had already done. Finally, Newcastle insisted that the execution of the treaty and declaration must not depend in any way on future negotiations between Dresden and Vienna, since it was obvious that Austria would never consent to the double marriage proposal.[3]

Brühl showed no haste to discuss Newcastle's propositions; but Williams, counting too much on his intimacy with Brühl and the King, gave Newcastle his opinion that it would be very difficult for Saxony to back out now that Britain was so generous. When Brühl returned from the royal hunting-party Williams

[1] Newcastle to Williams, 9 August, O.S. (Newcastle's italics); but a guarantee and a mere promise of this kind, no matter how strongly worded, differ completely in character.

[2] The one objection made by the Prince of Orange to Newcastle's instructions to Williams was the insertion of this section. (Fagel to Newcastle, 23 August, in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 135.)

[3] Keith to Williams, 24 November, in Add. MSS. 35492, f. 61; Dickens to Newcastle, 26 October, O.S., and 28 December, O.S., in S.P.F., Russia.

soon discovered his mistake.[1] Although on his own responsibility he removed the paragraph regarding Saxon accession to the treaty of 1746 from the secret declaration, and made no attempt to reduce the subsidy below £48,000 for four years, Brühl refused to accept the article about the 6000 troops in either form, attempted to restore the guarantee of the Saxon dominions to the treaty,[2] and insisted that the secret declaration must be merely a "verbal" one.[3]

Too late Williams realised the difficulty of his position. A complete deadlock had apparently been reached between the British and Saxon negotiators. Keyserling tried to arrange a compromise. He proposed that, to enable the British Government to throw dust in the eyes of Parliament, Brühl should admit the article concerning the 6000 troops, but that the British Government should give a private assurance that it would never actually ask for the troops.[4] Williams naturally rejected this proposal, and Keyserling then exerted all his influence to persuade Williams and Calkoen to sign the treaty as it stood *sub spe rati*. Keyserling's advice would not have had much weight with Williams, but it was enforced by the hard logic of facts. Brühl was apparently wavering; the rest of the Saxon Privy Council, headed by the redoubtable Hennicke, who, Williams believed, was gaining ground at Brühl's expense,[5]

[1] Williams communicated Newcastle's project to Brühl on 1 September. Brühl's counter-project was handed to Williams on the 5th. Both projects were discussed at a conference between Brühl, Williams, and Keyserling on the 7th, which was so unfavourable to Williams that he decided (Williams to Newcastle, 8 September) not to sign the treaty even *sub spe rati*, but merely to forward it to Newcastle. The chief difference between the protocol of 7 September and the treaty and declaration of 13 September is that the protocol definitely makes the giving of the vote depend upon the success of Austro-Saxon negotiations. The protocol of 7 September also asserted that even the 6000 Saxon troops would not be sent to the assistance of the Maritime Powers without a previous convention, whereas the treaty was ambiguous on this point.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 5 September.

[3] Williams to Newcastle, 8 September. *Cf.* Sternberg to Puebla (intercepted), 18 September, in *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 459.

[4] Sternberg to Puebla (intercepted), 18 September, in *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 459.

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 13 and 19 September. *Cf.*, however, *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 453–4. But Brühl's success in appointing his brother as Vice-President of the Chamber and thus depriving Hennicke of his undivided control of finance would make Hennicke all the more hostile to the policy of his successful rival. Williams, however, certainly exaggerates Hennicke's influence, either because he was deceived by Brühl or in order to explain the intractability of Brühl.

were solidly Francophil, and their attitude was stiffened by French threats to hand Saxony over to the resentment of Prussia if she concluded a subsidy treaty with the Maritime Powers.[1] After Hennicke the most influential members of the Privy Council were the brothers Loss, who

> make no secret of their wishing to see this Court in a strict alliance with that of Versailles. They talk of it publickly and the reason they give is that France is the only Power that can defend them against Prussia, and four years' experience to the contrary has not been able to convince them of this error.

Count Rex was the only member of the Privy Council who was not undoubtedly pro-French.[2] On the other hand, the Electoral Prince and Princess [3] supported the subsidy treaty with Britain, but they had little influence on affairs. The court was leaving Dresden for a round of hunting-parties on 14 September, and no business could possibly be settled after that date for at least a month; while Williams had received emphatic orders to bring the Saxon negotiation to a conclusion one way or the other without further delay.[4]

Rumours were already rife at Dresden that Loss had persuaded France to reopen negotiations for renewal of the former treaty of subsidies,[5] and they revived Williams's fears that Brühl was

[1] A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 264 : Despatch to Boyer, 1 July.

[2] These details are based on Williams's letters to Newcastle, dated 23 June (in S.P.F., Poland), and to Keith, dated 11 June (in Add. MSS. 35471, f. 125).

[3] Williams to Newcastle, 13 September.

[4] Newcastle to Williams, 9 August, O.S.

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 13 September ; Newcastle to Williams, 3 September, O.S. ; *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 389. See also the memorandum endorsed " September 1751," in A.E. Saxe, Supplément 2, which states the objections to subsidising Saxony only to sweep them aside. France could demand (1) Saxon assistance to prevent a war of the Empire against France, and (2) Saxon support in opposition to the election of the Archduke. These conditions would be of use to Prussia as well as to France, and are much less burdensome to Saxony than the English demands. They would have, therefore, a good chance of being accepted by Saxony. " Enfin si l'on considère les avantages de cette allᶜᵉ par rapport au Roy, on trouve que S. Mᵗᵉ, encouragera par ce moien ses alliés, qu'elle aura la pluralité dans le collège Elᵃˡ tant pour empêcher la cour de Vienne de faire déclarer contre luy une guerre de l'Empire que pour empêcher l'accroissemᵗ de la Puissance de la Mᵒⁿ d'Autrᵉ. . . . et que sa considérᵒⁿ augmentera à proportion de ce que les cours de Vienne et de Londres perdront de la leur. . . ." *Cf.* Yorke to Holderness (S.P.F., France, 241), 4/15 September (1) and 21 September/2 October : " [The French Court] pretend still to have some hopes of succeeding [at Dresden] and it is certain that M. Loss presses it as much as

playing with him in order to bring France up to the scratch. The most serious obstacle to a renewed Franco-Saxon *rapprochement* was Prussian influence at Versailles,[1] but this was on the decline owing to the death of Chambrier,[2] Frederick's envoy extraordinary to France, the quarrel between Puysieulx and the Prussian minister Ammon,[3] and the retiral of Puysieulx.[4] To crown all, the confinement of the Dauphiness was daily expected, and if she gave birth to a son she would amid the national rejoicings almost certainly be able to procure the renewal of the Franco-Saxon treaty of 1746, which would give Saxony a larger subsidy than that offered by Britain.[5]

In this, the second great crisis of his diplomatic career, Williams, although he was never able to distinguish between necessary activity and mere fussiness,[6] showed to much greater advantage than in the better-known episode of his quarrel with Frederick the Great. Brühl, although vastly inferior to Frederick in all the elements of greatness, was no mean antagonist[7] in a diplomatic battle of the wits, and he held nearly all the trumps. Williams played such cards as he had well, pressed Brühl as far as he dared, threatened to refuse to sign the treaty, and thus obtained certain modifications which Keyserling's influence was apparently unable to secure. He then decided to

he can." When the French Government learned that Saxony had actually concluded the subsidy treaty with Britain they were naturally dissatisfied with Saxony (A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 396 : Despatch to Boyer, 1 October), but publicly declared that they " did not think it prudent to purchase so dear a court upon which no dependence could be made on account of its unlimited and constant attachment to Russia." (Scheffer to Wynantz, 9 October, N.S. (intercepted), in Add. MSS. 32830, f. 238.)

[1] Yorke to H. V. Jones, 17/28 October, in Add. MSS. 32831, f. 25.

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 381.

[3] *Ibid.*, vii, 455, 457.

[4] *Ibid.*, vii, 455.

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 13 September. *Cf.* Sternberg to Puebla (intercepted), in *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 459.

[6] " M. de Williams ne m'a jamais paru si occupé. Il ne cesse de parler affaires avec Mme de Sternberg bien plus qu'avec M. son mari . . . Enfin [il] ne perd pas un moment de vue [Brühl] et il s'en empare le plus souvent et le plus longtems qu'il peut." (Boyer's despatch of 23 July in A.E. Saxe, 41.)

[7] On the difficulties of negotiating at Dresden *cf.* Marteville to Fagel, 15 July, 1749 (appended to Holderness's letter to Newcastle of 21 July/1 August, 1749, in S.P.F., Holland, 449) : " La manière extraordinaire dont les affaires sont ici traitées n'est pas à dire : on change de pensée à toute heure. Aujourd'hui l'on parle d'une façon, demain d'une autre et le langage que l'on tient varie autant que les mensonges que l'on débite partout sont en grand nombre."

make the best of a bad job by signing the treaty *sub spe rati*. The wisdom of this step is open to doubt. Williams believed that he had tied Brühl to the terms of the treaty without in any way committing his own Government.[1] This was legally correct, but he had in reality dragged Britain a step further into the morass into which Newcastle, at Williams's instigation, had recklessly ventured in the summer of 1750. In practice, although not in law, he had compromised the British Government, and made it more difficult for Newcastle to drop the Saxon negotiation (and with it the election) without fatally ruining British credit on the Continent at a time when war with France in the colonies was already threatening. Moreover, the gain he believed he had made by signing the treaty was in large part imaginary. Brühl regarded himself as no more bound to Britain than he had been before the signature of the treaty.[2] If, however, the British Government decided to go on with the negotiation it was certainly of some value to have tied Brühl down to definite terms acceptable to Britain on some points at least.

The alternative, which a professional diplomatist would probably have taken, was to have sent Brühl's version of the treaty to London unsigned to be discussed there by Newcastle and Flemming. This course had serious disadvantages. It was vain to expect Brühl to send to London full powers and instructions satisfactory to the British Government; so that, after the loss of several weeks, the negotiation would have had to be referred back to Dresden and there entered upon practically *ab initio*. And meantime France would probably, as at Copenhagen in 1749, and Bonn in 1750, have seized the opportunity to inflict another humiliation on Britain by taking Saxony out of her hands. Williams's signature preserved at least the illusion of progress, and the ultimate success of the negotiation went far to justify his action. It is not without significance that

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 13 September.

[2] Boyer's despatch of 15 September in A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 374; Maltzahn's reports in *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 458, 460. There is, however, some truth in Williams's analogy between Saxony and a Tory in the English Parliament "who after having given one vote with the Court . . . has been so abused by his party for so doing that it made it impossible for him ever to return to his old friends again." (Williams to Newcastle (private), 14 September, in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 290.)

Calkoen, who had long experience at the Saxon court, signed along with Williams.

The signed treaty sent by Williams to Newcastle differed in vital points from Newcastle's draft. Williams was successful in obtaining postponement of the payment of the first half-year's subsidy until 25 March, 1752, and in rejecting Brühl's attempt to extend Britain's good offices to secure compensation for Saxony into a guarantee of the Saxon dominions. But he failed to secure more than a promise of Saxon neutrality in the event of a general war except in two contingencies: (1) If Russia or Austria were attacked Saxony would at once send the stipulated succours under existing treaties (9000 men in the case of Russia, and 6000 in the case of Austria); (2) if Great Britain or the United Provinces were directly attacked 6000 troops would be sent to their assistance, but not until an *ad hoc* agreement had regulated the conditions of their service and payment. Further, Newcastle's article obliging Saxony to follow the Hanoverian lead on all German questions was altered to place Saxony on an equal footing with Hanover, and provided merely for consultation and co-operation so far as possible in conformity with the laws and constitutions of the Empire. The cumulative effect of these alterations was practically to transform the subsidy treaty proposed by Newcastle into a treaty of defensive alliance.

Williams had also to accept a 'verbal' promise of the Saxon vote, but the declaration was made by the King of Poland to Calkoen, Keyserling, and Williams in turn and could hardly be repudiated. It was, however, qualified by the insertion of the words "selon les lois et constitutions de l'Empire." Brühl, on his side, made a formal declaration to Calkoen and Williams[1] that necessary instructions and full power for Saxony's accession to the treaty of 1746 had already been sent to Petersburg, accepted Williams's declaration that the execution of the treaty and giving of the vote were independent of any Austro-Saxon negotiations,[2] acquiesced in Williams's refusal to make Britain liable for the United Provinces' share of the subsidy in case of default, but refused to send full powers to Flemming for

[1] Appended to Williams's letter to Newcastle of 13 September.

[2] This is Williams's contention, but there is no mention of it in either of the protocols of 7 and 13 September.

the obvious reason that this would be equivalent to an announcement that he was prepared to make further concessions to the British demands.

Williams's despatch announcing Saxony's refusal to give more than a verbal promise of the electoral vote was well received at London. The news of the birth of the Duke of Burgundy on 13 September[1] made Newcastle[2] and Hardwicke dread a Franco-Saxon *rapprochement*; and, although Hardwicke was still eager to secure something on paper, they decided[3] that the proposed treaty with Dresden should not be suffered to fail, and that the proposed verbal declaration would "do the business" as well as written engagements, especially as on a subject "of so secret a nature," even if the declaration "was in writing, it could not be produced." Frederick II's appointment of the Lord Marischal as his ambassador to France[4] filled the timorous British ministers with unreasoning dread.[5] Prussia, they thought, had "thrown off the mask," and Jacobitism would acquire a new lease of life. Prussia, Newcastle argued, could be held in check only by giving a subsidy to Russia, and the Jacobite bogey would be useful in securing popular approval for the Russian subsidy, long a favourite scheme of the King and dear to Newcastle's heart, although he had after much hesitation placed it after the election of the King of the Romans. The more serious consideration of this old project gave Saxony additional importance in the eyes of the British King and ministers owing to her intimate connection with Russia and vaunted influence at Petersburg.

"Without the treaty," Newcastle wrote,

> I think all thoughts of a system upon the Continent must be laid aside for . . . Russia alone when the Empire and Poland are lost would signify little and therefore this measure is necessary, even with a future view to Russia.[6]

The British Government no longer desired the treaty merely

[1] Vitzthum, 210–1.
[2] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 6 September, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32725, f. 128.
[3] Hardwicke to Newcastle, 7 September, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32725, f. 148.
[4] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 397, 401, 408, 423–4, 438–9, etc.
[5] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 6 September, O.S., in Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 403.
[6] Newcastle to W. Bentinck, 2 August, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32829, f. 46.

as a step towards the election, and were therefore inclined to demand as little as possible from Saxony.

But soon news[1] of further difficulties at Dresden and an intercepted letter from Loss to Brühl, which showed that Brühl was not merely "knocking at two *opposite* doors at the same time, but that he would take with both hands,"[2] aroused Hardwicke's ire:

> [Brühl hopes to be able to] swear to France that he has only taken our money and engaged for nothing. And their now *so late* agreeing to accede to the treaty of 1746 whereby certain contingents of troops are, by reference to former treaties, stipulated in certain events is, I believe, mainly to enable him the better to parry the article about the troops. I know you must conclude this treaty but when it comes over (as it will now signed *sub spe rati*) for God's sake (my dear Lord) make Count Flemming agree to something in writing in some shape or other for otherwise it will be a subsidiary treaty on our part without any reciprocity at all and what will you say to this in Parliament? By ye way will Sir C. be so wild as to sign *sub spe rati* without anything in writing either about the troops or the vote? If he does it must be for ye vanity of signing a treaty though he puts you here under the greater difficulty. . . . [*Re* king of the Romans] prudent as it was at first and as much as I was for it I begin almost to wish it had never been started . . . conclude immediately with Saxony in such a manner as to make it *decent*.[3]

At last on 28 September the eagerly awaited treaty[4] arrived, and, as in every crisis in the long-drawn-out election negotiations, a split in the Cabinet promptly followed.

"The King was impatient," Newcastle reports,[5]

> to know our thoughts upon ye treaty but seemed himself quite of opinion that it would do. When I came in today I found His Majesty in very good humour but by no means satisfied with ye condition *selon les lois de l'Empire* or disposed to yield to it. I told him your notion and mine of the necessity of concluding this treaty

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 8 September.
[2] Hardwicke to Newcastle, 10 September, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32725, f. 170.
[3] Add. MSS. 32725, f. 170, partly printed in Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 410–1.
[4] In S.P.F., Treaties, 384, printed in Wenck, ii, 593, ff.
[5] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 17 September, O.S., in Add. MSS. 35412, f. 34.

from the consequences which would necessarily attend the miscarriage of it. I made your court extreamly by only relating the truth of what passed between us upon ye subject of Russia. . . . I then acquainted His Majesty that I had this morning complained much to Count Flemming of the condition above mentioned upon which terms both France and Prussia had *at times* declared they would be for the election and also of what was inserted in the protocol relating to the troops which took off quite the force of ye engagement in the Treaty. In the latter he said we must adhere and insist upon the treaty and as to ye condition explain it in a way to answer our end and that it was impossible for his Court not to agree to our way of understanding *les lois et constitutions de l'Empire* in this respect. Upon which I immediately drew up draft of a declaration which he approved. I shewed it to the King who ordered me to speak to Münchausen upon it (who by the by had a little altered His Majesty's way of thinking) and we have made it a little stronger. . . . [Flemming] is positive the Court of Saxony will accept such a declaration signed by Sir Charles Williams and even thinks they will give such a one themselves, that is as to the interpretation of the words *les lois et constitutions de l'Empire* but I must doubt it and fear our plans will miscarry at last. The worst of all is my brother is more displeased than ever, calls the treaty dishonourable, contemptible, a subsidy given for nothing, and is persuaded there is some connection with France at the same time. . . . He complains of his having been illused in this affair: in short wants to lay hold of this pretext to get rid of the treaty. He was more violent today than I have seen him for some months past.[1]

In reply[2] Hardwicke took up his usual line—the *via media*. He fulminated against the "gross alterations" in the signed treaty, and censured Williams's signature because it "may possibly have laid you under greater difficulties than you would have met with from Flemming here at least as to some of the expressions," but then expressed his agreement with Newcastle as to the necessity of keeping a hold on Saxony, and concluded by approving Newcastle's very moderate instructions to Williams.

These instructions are the best justification of Williams's

[1] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 17 September, O.S., in Add. MSS. 35412, f. 34. It was presumably at this stage that Pelham threatened to oppose the passing of the treaty in the House of Commons. (Coxe, *Lord Walpole*, ii, 410–1.)

[2] Hardwicke to Newcastle, 18 September, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32725, f. 188.

signature of the treaty, since they show that in the main he had correctly gauged the attitude of the predominant faction in the British Government.[1] It mattered little to Newcastle on what conditions Saxony provided 6000 badly equipped troops so long as he had some return for the subsidy to show to Parliament. He cared as little whether Saxony was merely to concert action in imperial affairs with Hanover instead of blindly following Hanover's lead; the one essential was the vote. Newcastle wrote to Williams:[1]

> The next and great point of all is the electoral vote . . . that is the only thing to justify the treaty and if it is not clear we are all undone. Clear up that point so that Mr Pelham may say in the House of Commons that we have a satisfactory security for that and all will yet be well; but without that I can answer for nothing . . . if this treaty miscarries everything in my opinion is at an end. If this point of the vote is not fully cleared up to unwilling understandings you and I shall pass our times unpleasantly. My Honour, my reputation is concerned not to be the dupe of Count Brühl. I am sure they are safe in your hands. Don't lose the treaty and yet don't accept of a slight security for the vote.

But even in regard to the vote Williams's inadvertence had permitted ambiguity or worse to enter, for the King of Poland's verbal declaration was "accompanied with the very condition that those Powers who have determined to oppose the election have invented on purpose to defeat it, vizt:—*pourvu que cette élection se fît conformément aux lois et constitutions de l'Empire.*"[1] Williams had apparently overlooked the significance of these words—the more unpardonably because Brühl's whole conduct showed a desire to get a subsidy and evade doing anything in exchange.

Newcastle therefore ordered Williams to declare either to Brühl or to the King of Poland that, as a condition of the exchange of ratifications, the King of Great Britain insisted (1) that Brühl would abandon the protocol of 7 September so far as it related to the 6000 troops, and (2) that the Elector of Saxony would declare that he understood the qualification in his verbal declaration in the sense given to it by the supporters

[1] Newcastle to Williams (private), 20 September, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32830, f. 125.

of the election.[1] Further, as no mention was made in the protocols of the declaration by Williams that the execution of the treaty and the giving of the vote were to be independent of the success of British good offices at Vienna, Williams, before exchanging ratifications, was to hand this declaration in writing to Count Brühl and inform him of the cold reception of Keith's overture [2] regarding the double marriage. These instructions were confirmed by a second despatch, apparently written partly to satisfy Newcastle's disgust at Brühl's tricks,[3] but chiefly to soothe Pelham,[4] which commented strongly upon the court of Dresden's proceedings, but left the instructions of 1 October unaltered. The Dutch ministers heartily approved of the British decision to ratify the treaty after receiving satisfactory assurances from Count Brühl, and Calkoen was therefore instructed to continue to act in concert with Williams.[5]

After the usual delay Brühl invited Williams to Hubertusburg (a royal shooting-box), where he had a conference with Brühl on 20 October and secured his acceptance of the part of the declaration relating to the troops.[6] A few days later, after stormy conferences on the question of a written declaration, the King of Poland made verbally the declaration regarding the words "lois et constitutions de l'Empire" required by Newcastle.[7] Brühl also accepted Williams's declaration regarding the execution of the treaty being independent of Austro-Saxon negotiations; and on 31 October Williams reported that everything was in effect settled,[8] and that ratifications

[1] *I.e.*, that a majority of electors was sufficient, etc.

[2] Keith to Newcastle, 11 September (enclosing the Austrian reply—a civil refusal).

[3] Newcastle, in his letter to Keene (private) of 3 October, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32830, f. 186, refers to Brühl's "little dirty fetches to keep terms with France and defend himself from the King of Prussia's resentment."

[4] "They were necessary from the *Thing* and the disposition of *persons* here." (Newcastle to Hardwicke, 27 September, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32725, f. 220.) Hardwicke entirely approved. (Hardwicke to Newcastle, in Add. MSS. 32725, f. 231.)

[5] Dayrolle to Williams, 27 September/8 October, in Add. MSS. 15882, f. 96.

[6] Williams to Newcastle, 20 October.

[7] *Ibid.*, 24 October.

[8] Flemming's letters of revocation were despatched on 29 October along with instructions (Add. MSS. 32831, f. 29) to give the verbal declaration regarding the vote and to ask for Williams's continuance at the Saxon court, at least until after its next journey to Poland.

would be exchanged as soon as the Dutch ratifications arrived. This delay, in spite of Newcastle's urgent letter to Dayrolle,[1] was due partly to the constitution of the United Provinces, but chiefly to the sudden death of the Prince of Orange. As soon as the Dutch ratifications arrived on 9 November the whole transaction was settled without further difficulty and the ratifications exchanged on 11 November.

Brühl's surrender on the vital point is not difficult to explain. To refuse the explanation demanded by Newcastle would be equivalent to a confession that he had never intended to fulfil his side of the treaty. Williams intimated that in this event he had orders to communicate the whole negotiation to Bestuzhev to prove Saxony's bad intentions. Williams attributed his success chiefly to this threat,[2] but much weightier motives dictated Brühl's surrender. Brühl had all along decided to prefer a subsidy treaty with the Maritime Powers to one with France, because, although he wished to keep on good terms both with France and the imperial courts, if compelled to choose between them he would prefer the Eastern Powers. Special circumstances had enabled him in 1746 to take subsidies from France without seriously compromising his relations with Russia, although, even in 1746, there had been a coolness between Saxony and Austria. Now the European situation had changed. The alliance of Austria and Russia was firmly consolidated, and influential politicians in both countries were already planning a war against Prussia, which could almost certainly depend on the support of France.

Secondly, even in 1746 it had required the whole weight of Marshal Saxe's influence to secure subsidies from France on conditions which enabled Brühl to preserve his alliance with Russia. It was unlikely that the Dauphiness's influence, even at the moment of the birth of the Duke of Burgundy, would secure terms which would satisfy either the Austrian court, with which in 1751 Saxony, intent on the double marriage and

[1] 17 September, O.S., appended to Newcastle's letter to Williams of that date.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 12 October, N.S. When Guy Dickens informed Bestuzhev of the obstacles raised by Saxony " he was downright angry " and " told [Guy Dickens] he would speak very plainly to the Saxon resident." (Dickens to Newcastle, 21 September, O.S., in S.P.F., Russia, 56.)

the Polish succession, was determined to keep on good terms, or the Chancellor Bestuzhev, more critical now that he was firmly in the saddle and intent on dragging Saxony into his anti-Prussian coalition.

Thirdly, even in the more favourable conditions of 1746–9 the French alliance, apart from the substantial subsidies received, had been rather a failure from the Saxon point of view. No appreciable progress had been made towards reconciling France and the imperial courts; by making the attempt Saxony had earned the distrust of both parties and had provoked the relentless hostility of Prussia. In following this grandiose aim Saxony had sacrificed much smaller but more tangible advantages which she might possibly have made by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. And even Brühl must have repented at times of his decision in 1746 to walk the tight-rope between France and the imperial courts with his mortal enemy, Frederick of Prussia, adroitly tugging at the rope and waiting to pounce upon him if he fell. Thanks to his own dexterity, Brühl had averted a catastrophe, but he can hardly have welcomed the prospect of another nerve-racking performance on the tight-rope.

Finally, France, after a momentary change of policy in Poland inspired by Argenson, had reverted to her anti-Saxon policy there. The uncertain health of Augustus III raised the question of maintaining the connection of Saxony with Poland, which was even more fundamental to Saxony than the reconciliation of Austria and France. And the only possible prospect of preserving the personal union of Saxony and Poland lay in a close understanding with the imperial courts, backed if possible by the subsidies of the Maritime Powers.

Brühl's conduct, therefore, throughout the negotiation was designed to secure the maximum from the Maritime Powers and to give the minimum in exchange. Flemming discovered at London the maximum Newcastle could give. Brühl at Dresden forced Williams to take even less in exchange than he knew the British Government could accept, and thus discovered the British ultimatum. He had then no hesitation in ratifying the treaty, with the alterations insisted on by Britain,

since he was well content with the terms. By making a subsidy from Britain a condition of his accession to the treaty of 1746 he had enlisted Russian and Austrian support at London, and had then tricked Britain by pretending that the conclusion of the subsidy treaty alone delayed Saxony's accession to the treaty of 1746.

A few days after the exchange of ratifications Brühl gave Boyer, the somewhat sceptical French *chargé d'affaires* at Dresden, a disingenuous account of the treaty and declarations,[1] representing them as they stood before the declarations insisted upon by the British Government as the price of ratification. He asserted that the despatch of the 6000 troops was conditional on a subsequent convention, that Saxony was in no way bound to accede to the treaty of 1746, and that the verbal declaration in regard to the Saxon vote contained nothing contrary to the imperial constitution.[2] These assurances, he hoped, would enable him to maintain friendly relations with France, since the same device had allowed him to keep on good terms with the imperial courts after the Franco-Saxon treaty of 1746.

Newcastle, George II, and the Dutch ministers [3] were ignorant of these assurances and shared Brühl's satisfaction with the treaty.[4] It was true that Saxony's military resources were negligible, and that she could exercise little influence on the European balance—all the less because of Brühl's determination to stand as well as possible with both sides. But the Maritime Powers were intent on the election, and towards that end the promise of the Saxon vote was an important step. They had partially effaced the memory of the Cologne fiasco, secured six

[1] Boyer's despatch, 15 September, in A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 374 ; *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 554.

[2] Boyer to Havrincourt, 16 November (intercepted), in Add. MSS. 32831, f. 223. Similar assurances were given by Bülow to the Prussian ministers (*Pol. Corr.*, viii, 536).

[3] Dayrolle to Williams, 9/20 November, 1751, in Add. MSS. 15882, f. 101b.

[4] Newcastle to Albemarle (private), 14 November, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32831, f. 263b. Newcastle, who had at first defended Williams against the censures of Hardwicke and Pelham, changed his mind when he discovered how easily Williams had secured the changes in the treaty desired by the British Government. " I think," he wrote to Holderness on 20 October, O.S., " our Dresden affair will do, and would have done sooner if [Williams] had not been so much in haste to have the air of signing a treaty." (Add. MSS. 32831, f. 58.)

votes in the electoral college, and now had hopes even of recovering Cologne.[1] Once again Albemarle, the British ambassador at Versailles, was instructed [2] to sound the court of France in regard to the election in the hope of securing its acquiescence. But whether this was obtained or not, Prussia had still to be reckoned with, and Newcastle was already devising ways and means of securing Russia by subsidies [3] in order to bridle Prussia, encourage the bribed but wavering electors,[4] and secure a quiet election.[5] Pelham was far from sharing his brother's satisfaction, and must bitterly have regretted his original blunder in not vetoing the scheme of the election. He had been partly cajoled and partly nagged into accepting the Newcastle election project on the assurance that a trifling subsidy to one elector was all that would be required from the Treasury. Step by step, the consummation of the election receded before them; every step towards it meant an appreciable drain on the Exchequer, an undignified squabble in the Cabinet,[6] and a bitter attack on the Government in Parliament.

In the debates on the Saxon treaty in the two Houses [7] Bedford was its most determined and influential opponent, and lost the King's favour as a result of his opposition. "Old" Horace Walpole spoke at great length against it, and then concluded with the remark that he would nevertheless vote in favour of the treaty out of loyalty to the King. Williams's bosom friend Fox

[1] Newcastle to W. Bentinck (very private), 28 November, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32832, f. 32.

[2] Holderness to Albemarle, 12 December, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32832, f. 191.

[3] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 6 September, O.S., in Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 406–7 ; Newcastle to W. Bentinck, 28 November, O.S., printed in *Archives*, ii, 166–81 ; Newcastle to Albemarle (private), 14 November, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32831, f. 263b.

[4] Newcastle to Yorke, 24 December (very private), in Add. MSS. 32832, f. 297.

[5] Newcastle to W. Bentinck (very private), 28 November, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32832, f. 30.

[6] " S'il ne tenait qu'au duc de Newcastle il donnerait tête baissée dans les idées de son maître ; mais . . . le sieur Pelham, qui tient les cordes de la bourse et qui gouverne son frère aussi despotiquement que le Parlement . . . empêche qu'on n'y songe sérieusement et se contente de la laisser tenir en haleine pour faire plaisir au Roi." (Michell to Frederick, 9 November, in *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 538.)

[7] Walpole, *George II*, ii, 240–54 ; Coxe, *Lord Walpole*, ii, 326–40, and *Pelham Administration*, ii, 208–14 ; S.P.F., Poland (circular despatches of 24, 28, 31 January, 1752).

spoke in mild approval of it.[1] The treaty was passed in both Houses by enormous majorities to the delight of Newcastle, who hastened to inform his confidant, Joseph Yorke, of the ministerial triumph.[2] "In short, we had a great day. But the folly of the Court of Vienna, the weakness of the Republic, and our own want of *steadiness* may bring all this to nothing."

[1] Ilchester, i, 170–1, where Lord Ilchester makes the statement that Williams "as minister at Dresden had the negotiations in hand" for the Bavarian (*sic*) subsidy.

[2] Newcastle to Yorke (private), 24 January, in Add. MSS. 32833, f. 228.

CHAPTER VI

DRESDEN (November 1751–March 1753)

Negotiations for Saxon accession to the Treaty of the Two Empresses—Coldness between Austria and Saxony—Newcastle proceeds with the election project—Hyndford's visit to Dresden—Arrangements for the election of the Polish Diet—Williams's visit to Hanover—Election negotiations there—Saxony loyally supports Britain, but in vain—Effect of Saxon support on the election negotiations — Cordial relations of Britain and Saxony — Brühl expects payment for his support—Question of the succession in Poland—Williams proposes that Britain should support the Electoral Prince of Saxony to avoid danger of another War of the Polish Succession —Attitude of the British Government towards this proposal—Renewal of Prusso-Saxon quarrels over the *Steuer*—Saxony appeals to her allies for protection and begs France to restrain Prussia—Divergence between Britain and Saxony.

The conclusion of the treaty of subsidy left Williams with no serious business to transact at Dresden. In the midst of the negotiation he had intrigued busily [1] to secure the succession at the Hague to Holderness, the new Secretary of State for the Southern Department, but in vain, for the post had been earmarked for Joseph Yorke, the rising son of the Lord Chancellor. He had therefore to content himself with his present post, and his main preoccupation became the negotiation for the accession of Saxony to the Treaty of the Two Empresses.[2] This was eagerly desired by the British Government [3] as a step towards the great defensive alliance, which Newcastle without appreciable success had been endeavouring to form since 1748.

Williams might well have spared the pains he took in this matter, especially as he was not fully informed of the earlier negotiations between Saxony and the two imperial courts. He foolishly accepted at their face value Brühl's assurances [4] that

[1] Williams to Newcastle (private), 3/14 May, 11 July; Newcastle to Williams, 19 July, O.S. (private), in Add. MSS. 32828, ff. 1, 140, and 248 respectively; H. Digby to Newcastle, 19 June, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32724, f. 384.

[2] *Geheimnisse*, i, 103–229, gives full accounts of this negotiation, with extracts from Saxon despatches, memorials, etc. *Cf.* also *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 359–60, 376, 394, 461–2; x, 33. The Williams-Keith correspondence throws some additional light on it (Add. MSS. 35472 and 35492).

[3] *Supra*, p. 85.

[4] Williams to Newcastle, 24 October, 1751; *Geheimnisse*, i, 215.

orders and full powers had been sent to Funcke at Petersburg to complete the Saxon accession. Such instructions had indeed been sent, but they were still conditional on the imperial courts' acceptance of Saxony's accession on the footing of existing engagements and without accepting the secret articles. In addition Brühl, on the advice of the Privy Council, insisted on all his former demands, especially on the promise of Austro-Russian support at the next vacancy of the throne in Poland and the assurance that if Prussia seized some district of Saxony as a pledge for payment of the *Steuer* capital and interest, then the imperial courts would regard Prussian action as constituting the *casus fœderis*. Saxony's accession to the body of the treaty on the footing of existing engagements was hardly worth having in Austria's eyes,[1] especially as Brühl had repeatedly declared that he regarded the existing treaties between Austria and Saxony as remaining in force. And to secure this trifling gain she would have to accept the new and onerous obligations insisted on by Brühl.

Williams, apparently ignorant of these fundamental difficulties, believed the main obstacle was Saxony's failure to make a formal reply to the Austrian invitation of 1749 to Saxony to accede. He therefore secured[2] from Brühl a declaration that he was ready to accede to the treaty on the footing of existing engagements and had accordingly sent full powers to his minister at Petersburg. Just as he failed to perceive the meaning of the words "laws and constitutions of the Empire," he did not understand the significance of the qualification, "on the foot of existing engagements," and repeatedly expressed surprise that the court of Vienna did not return an obliging answer.[3] Other differences accentuated Austro-Saxon coldness—on the one hand, Saxony's insistence on the double marriage project and her continued complaisance towards France,[4] on the other, Brühl's discovery of the proposed candidature of Prince Charles

[1] Boyer's despatch of 13 June, 1751, in A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 240b ; Böttiger, ii, 455.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 4 October, 1751.

[3] Williams to Newcastle, 15 December, 1751, 9 January, 6 February, 1752. Newcastle was completely puzzled by the contradictory reports received from Petersburg, Vienna, and Dresden (Newcastle to Williams, 3 March, O.S., 1752).

[4] Newcastle to Keith, 14 February, O.S., in Add. MSS. 35472, f. 160.

of Lorraine, the brother of the Emperor, for the Polish throne,[1] and Austria's action in the Hohenlohe affair,[2] which forced the Protestant electors to co-operate against the Emperor.

Although Brühl was for a time successful in concealing from Williams his bad faith in regard to Saxony's accession to the Treaty of the Two Empresses, it was soon apparent that Saxony would be as untrustworthy an ally to Britain as she had been to France after the conclusion of the Franco-Saxon treaty of subsidy in 1746. The course of the negotiations had impressed upon British ministers a firm conviction of Brühl's intention to keep on good terms with France, and their fears of Saxon treachery were stimulated by the manifest and acute friction between Saxony and Austria.[3] Henceforth Williams's main duty at Dresden was to watch carefully Saxony's relations with France, and, if possible, to induce Saxony to abandon her *ménagements* for France, to smooth the friction between Austria and Saxony, and to persuade Saxony to enter wholeheartedly into the old system.

[1] Droysen, v, 423–4. On Austria's real attitude see Beer, who discusses this question in his introduction and prints extracts from Bernes' despatches from Petersburg.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 13, 16, 27 February.

[3] Keith writes with his usual good sense on Austro-Saxon relations at this time : " [If Saxony intends to be successful at Vienna she must put her house in order, reduce expenses, restore credit, make the army effective.] You may easily imagine the low opinion they have hitherto had here [Vienna] of the forces, economy, and system of the Saxon court lessens the desire they should naturally have to cultivate the friendship and alliance of a neighbouring state which might otherwise be so useful to them, and which might decide the balance of power in Germany and have so great an influence upon the general affairs of Europe. But in place of considering them in this important light the value they put upon them at present is no more than what arises from the utility and assistance they can expect from them in case of necessity which I am afraid they esteem at a very low rate. You know likewise that in all courts one finds enemies as well as friends ; if Saxony then by following the route I have traced out for them will strengthen the hands of the well intentioned here, there may I doubt not be ways found to stop the mouths of their adversaries and to promote the success of their negotiations. I have reason to think that the ministry here will be ready to renew the same engagements which subsisted between the two courts during the late war for the security of Saxony provided the latter will accede to the treaty of Petersburg [1746] after the example of England. It will therefore be necessary for them to take this step without hesitating in order to their having a title to claim the powerful succours they stand in need of to protect themselves against the vexations and oppressions of the King of Prussia. This engagement will likewise very much facilitate the different views of the court of Dresden in Poland as well as here. I look upon all other remedies except those I have proposed as insufficient and as mere palliatives." (Keith to Williams, 7 February, 1751, in Add. MSS. 35492, f. 69b.) *Cf.* Boyer's despatch of 13 June, 1751 (A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 240).

The first important test of Saxon sincerity was provided by Newcastle's decision that the election, now that six votes out of nine in the electoral college had been secured, must be carried through without further delay. The electors opposed to the election had been ostentatiously holding conferences at Mannheim under the auspices of France and Prussia.[1] It was obviously desirable, if the election was to be carried through, to take the preliminary steps towards it before the Opposition could organise itself effectively and before the tepid zeal of the hired electors cooled. Moreover, unless immediate steps were taken to carry through the election, there might be a popular outcry against the subsidy treaties in Britain and the United Provinces, and the latter might even fall into arrears in paying their share of the subsidies.[2] If this happened France would find it easy to step in, recover the hired electors, and more than restore her superiority in the Empire.

On 28 January, therefore, Newcastle instructed Williams [3] to inform the Elector of Saxony that it was intended to proceed to the election in the summer and to invite his concurrence in the preliminary steps. Illness delayed Williams's execution of these instructions, but when he broached the subject to Brühl on 28 February he received, with a promptitude little short of the miraculous, the reply that the King of Poland was "firmly resolved to adhere to [his] engagements . . . and to exactly conform with the king [of Great Britain] through the whole affair of the election." [4] Before this entirely satisfactory reply reached London Newcastle had decided to send a special envoy to Vienna to convince the Austrian court of the certainty of success, and then to arrange the necessary preliminaries. The reluctance of Austria to proceed with the election was not unnatural in view of the way in which Newcastle conducted the negotiation, *e.g.*, he waited for eight months before communicating to Vorster, the Austrian envoy, the assurances he had obtained for the Saxon vote.[5] Newcastle's self-righteousness is clearly revealed

[1] Newcastle to Williams, 17 January, O.S.
[2] Newcastle to Hyndford, 28 February, O.S., in S.P.F., Germany (Empire), 188.
[3] Similar instructions were sent to Burrish, at Munich, and Keith, at Vienna.
[4] Williams to Newcastle, 5 March.
[5] Minute in Add. MSS. 35473, f. 113.

in his own account of his motives in sending Hyndford on the special mission to Vienna.[1]

> It would have been impossible to go on with the court of Vienna without some friendly expostulation upon their late conduct. Keith is not of weight enough and has suffered himself to be amused by them or at least has not had resolution enough to resist or contradict them. I think I can govern Hyndford—there is no fear of his being imperious. He is Austrian *à brûler* and he is too good a courtier not to do what he is bid. My friends may trust me. I will not break with the court of Vienna—all that I am doing is to be able to support them but they must help themselves.

Hyndford was instructed to take Munich and Dresden on his way to Vienna, so that he could vouch personally to the Empress for the readiness of the two imperial vicars to proceed immediately to the election.

Williams was accordingly warned to expect Hyndford at Dresden, and to take any steps necessary to procure for him assurances of Saxon co-operation.[2] Newcastle's principal fear was that Hyndford, in spite of the decided Austrian rejection of the scheme, would be importuned to support the Saxon double marriage project,[3] which he could not possibly do, not only because it would have alienated the court of Vienna and made it less likely to go on with the election, but because Britain had already committed herself to the support of Bavarian claims to a Habsburg marriage alliance.[3]

Hyndford arrived on 27 March, and spent four days at Dresden.[4] He was completely satisfied with his audience of the King and his conference with Brühl, Keyserling, and Williams. The main project raised by Brühl was to secure the succession to the Polish crown to the Electoral Prince of Saxony. The Saxon ministers can hardly have shared Hyndford's satisfaction with his visit, because when Saul in the evening broached the

[1] Newcastle to Yorke (private), 14 February, in Add. MSS. 32833, f. 427. Hyndford's instructions and " separate and private instructions," both dated 21 February, 1752, are in S.P.F., Germany (Empire), 188.

[2] Newcastle to Williams, 14 February, O.S., 3 March, O.S.

[3] Newcastle to Hyndford (private), 28 February, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32834, f. 125.

[4] His report in S.P.F., Germany (Empire), 188, 12 April, N.S., 1752. *Cf.* Williams to Newcastle, 29 March, 2 April.

question of the double marriage Hyndford records: "I pull'd out my watch and broke up the meeting upon pretence of some business, and to save appearances Sir Charles went home with me." This example of Hyndfordian diplomacy leaves one with a considerably enhanced respect for the ability of Hyndford's colleague at Dresden, who had already excused British inaction by pointing out that Saxony had said the double marriage proposal came originally from Petersburg, and yet Russia had taken no steps to support the Saxon proposal at Vienna. Brühl's raising of the Polish succession question in preference to that of the double marriage shows the extent of his alarm at the Lorraine candidature, and probably also his growing conviction that Austria would never consent to the proposed double marriage. Hyndford was allowed to depart with full assurances of Saxon co-operation in the election and without Saxon demands on the court of Vienna; all that he was asked to do was to inquire whether the rumours of the Lorraine candidature were well founded.

Williams believed that Saxony was now firmly won over to the good cause, and when, a few days after Hyndford's departure, Gross, his old friend in adversity at Berlin, arrived at Dresden to supersede Keyserling he believed that he and Gross in close co-operation would rule the court of Dresden and destroy every vestige of French influence.[1]

Brühl's conduct continued to be satisfactory, and he gave every assistance to Williams [2] in examining another Jacobite 'mare's nest' [3] in accordance with Newcastle's instructions.[4] Williams's high hopes were soon afterwards confirmed by the death of Hennicke, "the greatest support of the French and Prussian interest" [5] at Dresden. The only obstacle to Saxony's

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 2, 14, 19 April. Combined British and Austrian efforts persuaded Bestuzhev that Keyserling should be recalled, but certain shady intrigues gave Keyserling a hold on the Chancellor, who dared not openly recall him (Dickens to Newcastle, 15 June, O.S., 1751, in S.P.F., Russia). He therefore arranged that the Greek synod should complain of Keyserling's being a Protestant, and tried to secure his resignation in this way (Dickens to Newcastle, 9 July, O.S., 1751, S.P.F., Russia). When this failed he promoted Keyserling to Vienna, where he would not be liable to the same temptations as at Dresden. The whole affair throws a sinister light on the character and methods of the Russian Chancellor.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 27, 30 April, 10, 14, 31 May.

[3] Lang, *Pickle the Spy*, 135, 183–4.

[4] Newcastle to Williams, 2 January, O.S.

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 11 June. Cf. *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 137.

cordial return to the old system seemed to be the attitude of the court of Vienna, which, although willing to give a grudging welcome to the prodigal, absolutely refused to kill the fatted calf in his honour. Williams had perforce to admit that his "perpetual endeavours" had failed to improve the relations of Austria and Saxony.[1]

The attention of the court of Dresden in the spring of 1752 was mainly devoted to the arrangements for the meeting of the Polish Diet. The Bulls for the summoning of the Diet had to be issued on Polish soil, and the King of Poland, therefore, had to make a journey, usually in June, to Fraustadt, the nearest Polish town. Brühl was now resolved to prepare the way for the continuance of the union of Saxony and Poland after the death of Augustus III, and proposed to send his son-in-law, Count Mniszek, a Polish magnate, to Hanover, in order, Williams believed, to obtain guarantees of British support from George II and Newcastle. Williams, therefore, begged permission to come to Hanover to give his views on Polish affairs, to receive instructions for the Diet, and to arrange for his co-operation with the Russian and Austrian ministers in support of "our party" in Poland.[2] Newcastle was not unwilling[3] to have a confidential talk with him, not only on the affairs of Poland, but on the great affair of the election, but the King vetoed the proposal with the remark, "He wants to come to talk his wit everywhere, and you [Newcastle] to have him to talk politics to."[4] Newcastle feared that the refusal would be laid at his door not merely by the mortified minister, but by that rising politician, Mr Fox.[5] This risk seemed so serious to Newcastle that he had recourse to his usual ally in effecting a change of the royal mind—Lady Yarmouth, or, as she is frequently called in the confidential correspondence of the Pelhams and Hardwicke, "the Lady." After "three weeks' solicitations"[6] "the King of himself said H.

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 24 May. *Cf.* Yorke to Newcastle (private), 21 April/2 May (founded on Calkoen's despatches), in Add. MSS. 32835, f. 197.
[2] Williams to Newcastle, 10 May; Williams to Newcastle (private), 28 May, in Add. MSS. 32836, f. 196.
[3] Newcastle to Pelham, 3/14 May, in Add. MSS. 32727, f. 73.
[4] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 6/17 May, in Add. MSS. 35412, f. 89.
[5] Newcastle to Pelham, 31 May/11 June, in Add. MSS. 32727, f. 307; Newcastle to Williams, 10/21 May (private), in Add. MSS. 32836, f. 61.
[6] Newcastle to Ellis, 5/16 June, in Add. MSS. 32727, f. 343.

Williams might come for a week only—that would be sufficient —he wouldn't have him running about with his wit any longer." [1]

Williams hastened to avail himself of the royal consent,[2] and arrived at Hanover just as the election negotiations, which even Newcastle had despaired of in May, owing to the "impertinence . . . impudence and ingratitude of the court of Vienna" [3] and the exorbitant demands of the Elector Palatine, took a more favourable turn. Hope sprang eternal in Newcastle's breast. If only Britain would pay the difference between the demands of the Elector Palatine and the offers of the court of Vienna—a mere trifle of £60,000 or so—France would concur in the election, and all would yet go well. While awaiting Pelham's reply, Newcastle tried to persuade the court of Vienna to consider the Elector Palatine's pretensions [4] and to approve the convocation of an electoral assembly. Stormy but fruitless conferences were held between Newcastle and the ministers of Austria, Hanover, Bavaria, Saxony, and Mainz, at which "the Saxon and Bavarian [ministers] as ministers from courts that are well paid were obliged now and then to give their nods of approbation to My Lord Duke's arguments and at the same time to swallow many a reproach in the heat of the conference." [5] Newcastle was prepared to go on with the election even without the Palatine vote, and to trust that France and Prussia would not proceed to extremities; but the covert threats of Vergennes, the French minister, and the objections of the court of Vienna, notably weakened the resolution of his allies. Count Rex, the Saxon minister, in accordance with his latest instructions,[6] gave Saxon approval to the summoning of an electoral assembly, but with the reservation that in the meantime events might show that it would be undesirable to proceed to the actual election. Moreover, on the other great point—the satisfaction of the Elector Palatine's claims—he had received no instructions and could not sign, although he approved, the *projet de protocole* of

[1] Newcastle to Pelham, 3/14 June, in Add. MSS. 35412, f. 125b.
[2] Newcastle to Williams (private), 31 May/11 June, in Add. MSS. 32836, f. 391.
[3] Newcastle to Pelham, 20/31 May, in Coxe, *Pelham Administration*, ii, 421.
[4] See paper given to Vorster, dated 16/27 June, in Add. MSS. 32837, f. 206.
[5] Stadion to Elector of Mainz (intercepted), 28 June, N.S., in Add. MSS. 32837, f. 174.
[6] 21 June, N.S., in Add. MSS. 32837, f. 94.

16/27 June,[1] which laid down a plan for proceeding immediately with the election, and urged the court of Vienna to make the necessary concessions to the electors.

Williams while at Hanover was fully informed by Newcastle of what was going on, and was now sent back to Dresden to obtain the King of Poland's unconditional acceptance of the *projet de protocole*. He left Hanover on 28 June, reached Dresden on 1 July, and carried out his instructions without difficulty. Orders were immediately despatched to Rex to sign the protocol and co-operate in everything relating to the election with the British ministers.[2] The King declared also that in order to facilitate the election he would postpone to a more suitable occasion the assertion of any claims he had against the court of Vienna.[3]

Williams's success gave the election negotiations, which had once again been on the point of collapse, a new lease of life.[4] The Saxon example had considerable influence upon the wavering electors, and Newcastle hoped that it might even induce the court of Vienna to come heartily into the election upon the basis of the protocol of 16/27 June.[5] These hopes were, however, doomed to disappointment, for the court of Vienna promptly submitted a counter protocol, which insisted *inter alia* upon securing a majority in the college of princes and providing "for security both within and without the Empire" before proceeding to the election. Encouraged by this "unintelligible, inconsistent, impracticable protocol," [6] France and Prussia were confirmed in their opposition, and their menaces "succeeded with every one but the King of Poland." [7]

The *rapprochement* of Britain and Saxony, which had gone

[1] In Add. MSS. 32837, f. 206.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 2, 3 July; Williams to Newcastle (private), 2, 3 July, in Add. MSS. 32837, ff. 276, 278.

[3] Williams to Newcastle, 14 July.

[4] Newcastle to Pelham, 15/26 July, in Add. MSS. 32728, f. 207: "in short we are upon our legs again." *Cf.* H. V. Jones to Williams, 28 June/9 July, in Newport Papers.

[5] Newcastle to W. Bentinck ("very private and for yourself"), 24 June/5 July, in Add. MSS. 32838, f. 12; Newcastle to Williams, 28 June/9 July; Newcastle to Keith and Hyndford, 28 June/9 July, in Add. MSS. 35473, f. 143; Newcastle to Holderness (private), 24 June/5 July, in Add. MSS. 32728, f. 83.

[6] Newcastle to Keith (private), 19/30 July, in Add. MSS. 32838, f. 337.

[7] Newcastle to Holderness, 15/26 July, in Add. MSS. 32839, f. 14.

on spasmodically since Williams's arrival in Dresden in 1747, reached its closest point at this time.[1] Saxony's behaviour in the election question, although Newcastle praised its "disinterestedness" in the hope of arousing rivalry in the other electors, was quite the reverse. The quarrels of Saxony and Prussia over the *Steuer* still continued, and not less violent were the squabbles of George II, both as king and as elector, with Frederick of Prussia. Common antagonism to Prussia[2] naturally drew George II and Augustus III together, especially at a time when the relations of Austria and Saxony were seriously strained. The election might be regarded as a duel between George II and Frederick II, with Maria Theresa and Louis XV as reluctant seconds, and Augustus III naturally supported George II.

Brühl, however, had no intention of intensifying Prussian hostility to himself, and probably knew that the attitude of Austria and the lukewarmness of the bribed electors would save him from performing what he had so readily promised. And in exchange for the mere appearance of support he counted on securing substantial advantages in addition to the British subsidy. His first demand was for the prolongation of the subsidy treaty, although only the first of eight instalments had yet been paid. This, of course, was politely shelved.[3] He then asked for and secured British good offices at Vienna for the marriage of the Archduke Joseph to a Saxon princess and for Austrian support of the Saxon candidate for the Grand Mastership of the Teutonic order.[4]

But Brühl's main object was to secure British support for the Saxon candidate for the crown of Poland on the death of Augustus III. If Austria, as Brühl feared, was supporting Charles of Lorraine the basis of Saxony's precarious hold on Poland was gone. Russian military assistance could still be counted on; but, failing that of Austria, the diplomatic support of Britain would be of great value, especially as British influence

[1] It is curious that Frederick repeatedly speaks of coldness between Britain and Saxony at this very time. (*Pol. Corr.*, ix, 124, 141.)

[2] Brühl "ne peut parler de Sa Mté Prussienne sans animosité." (A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 239b: Boyer's despatch of 13 June, 1751.)

[3] Newcastle to Williams, 28 June/9 July.

[4] Newcastle to Williams, 28 June/9 July and 19/30 July; Williams to Newcastle, 7 August; orders sent to Keith and Hyndford (2nd apart), 20 June/1 July, in Add. MSS. 35473, f. 136.

at Vienna might even win back Austrian favour for the Saxon candidate. Williams had already promised Brühl to do his utmost to secure British support, and used once again in his despatches to his Government the argument which had proved so effective in inducing it to adopt his scheme for the election of a King of the Romans. A vacancy in the Polish throne, he argued, would almost certainly lead to a general war in Europe, and therefore, as soon as the election of the King of the Romans was accomplished, Britain ought to take steps to assure in advance the Polish succession and thus prevent the outbreak of war on the death of Augustus III, which would render nugatory Britain's success in electing the King of the Romans.[1] This argument was supported by another calculated to appeal both to the King and to Parliament, though for widely different reasons —the suspected designs of Frederick of Prussia upon the independence and integrity of Poland.

"These designs," Newcastle, inspired by Williams, writes to his brother,[2] the Premier,

> are generally thought to be not only to make a King of Poland; but to procure Dantzig and Polish Prussia for himself thereby he might become a considerable Maritime Power in [the Baltic], and would be able to distress and ruin all the commerce of other nations there; and particularly that of the Maritime Powers. And this is a very serious consideration for the Dutch and us.

As early as the end of 1751 Williams's projects were widely known in Poland,[3] and while he was at Hanover in June 1752 he submitted a cut-and-dried plan [4] for securing the Polish succession during Augustus III's lifetime, and discussed it and the Saxon project brought forward by Rex fully with Newcastle.[5] In his scheme Williams relied chiefly on the support of the Czartoryski. He argued that the less the Saxon minister had to propose the better the plan would be, because Brühl's intervention would not only provoke the Opposition and give them a handle to defeat the election, but would arouse the distrust of the best-

[1] Williams to Newcastle (private), 28 May, in Add. MSS. 32836, f. 196.
[2] 12 October, 1752, N.S., in Add. MSS. 32730, f. 78.
[3] A.E. Pologne, 236 : Castéra's despatch of 28 December.
[4] Endorsed " R., June 16/27, 1752," in S.P.F., Poland.
[5] Newcastle to Williams, 28 June/9 July and 17/28 July.

intentioned Poles, who suspected his selfish aims and knew him too well to rely upon his promises. The ministers of the Tsaritsa and her allies alone could give courage to the well-intentioned Poles. Russia, Gross was positive, would "support the election of the Prince Royal of Poland in preference to all other persons and next to him the Prince Czartoryski"; and if the King of Prussia should attack Poland "upon account of any legal measures that the principal Poles might take for preserving the peace and tranquillity of their country" Russia would support the "Polish liberties *totis viribus*" and attack the King of Prussia. Williams then urged his Government to persuade the court of Vienna to disavow the Lorraine candidature, and follow Russia's lead.

> As to the part which the English minister must act in this affair I think with all humble submission that it would be sufficient for him to be instructed to declare to the King of Poland that His Majesty approves the measure of placing the Prince Royal upon the throne of Poland at his present Polish Majesty's death and that the King will use his endeavours and employ his good offices to dispose the Poles to enter into His Majesty's views in favour of the Electoral Prince of Saxony which the King looks upon as a measure necessary for the continuation of the present tranquillity and that His Majesty will second and support that election as far as is consistent with the laws and liberties of the Republic: that His Majesty also will endeavour to prevent as far as in him lies that the kingdom of Poland or its members should either be molested or attacked on account of any legal act they may do for the preservation of their interior peace, for the better securing their laws and liberties, and the placing in due time the Electoral Prince of Saxony upon the throne of Poland. This will be sufficient to satisfy the court of Dresden and this declaration repeated to the Poles will give them satisfaction at the same time as it leaves His Majesty free from any engagement that might beget dangerous consequences.

These proposals were not unfavourably received by Newcastle, but they went far beyond anything he could possibly accept in a question which was still a mere contingency and in which his allies were much more directly interested than Britain. Pelham had taken the alarm at Williams's first reference in his despatches to the necessity of making preparations for the next

vacancy in Poland [1] and remained unconvinced by his brother's half-hearted advocacy of the scheme. Newcastle therefore contented himself with giving his informal approval to the Saxon candidature. Williams's summary of his instructions makes this clear:

> I shall hear what the Poles have to say; I shall examine their placards and . . . make a faithful report of the whole to Your Grace. All that I think myself at liberty to do is to tell two or three of the chief and best-intentioned Poles that I know His Majesty's wishes and inclinations are to see the Prince Royal succeed the King his father on the Polish throne.[2]

This did not go nearly far enough to satisfy Brühl, and Rex continued to press [3] for a formal British declaration that she would do her utmost, in agreement with Russia, to secure in advance the Polish succession to the Saxon candidate, and would invite the accession of the court of Vienna to the declaration.[4] Williams was therefore instructed to

> acquaint Count Brühl that, however disposed the King is to favour any view of His Polish Majesty, which may not be attended with hazard and expense, in return for the King of Poland's exemplary conduct upon the present great occasion, and particularly however material His Majesty may think it for the parties most nearly concerned to take early measures to prevent any disturbance in case of the vacancy of the crown of Poland, and to secure the succession of the Prince Royal of Saxony, the King cannot take any active part in it; much less begin and originally make a proposal relating to it. When you are in Poland you will be able to see and judge of the inclinations of the Poles; and the measures which may be proposed by the well intentioned. You will also have opportunities of frequently conferring with Count Brühl upon the situation of things there and the temper of the Poles. And it is His Majesty's pleasure that you should make a report of the whole to the King, upon which His Majesty will then be able to judge how far and in what manner he may be of use in forwarding or supporting any resolution which the Poles may be disposed to take in concert with

[1] A. Stone to Newcastle, 19 June, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32728, f. 55.
[2] Williams to Newcastle, 2 August.
[3] Newcastle to Williams, 28 June/9 July and 17/28 July.
[4] Direct attempts to secure Austrian support were being made by Saxony at Vienna. (*Pol. Corr.*, ix, 45.)

> the Empress-Queen and the Empress of Russia. But you are expressly to avoid laying the King under any engagement whatsoever. His Majesty's inclination and good wishes you very well know. But in the present circumstances the King does not think proper to give any assurances before His Majesty knows the extent of what may be proposed and the consequences that may attend it. . . . I [Newcastle] told Rex at first and repeated it yesterday that the failure of the great and publick object of the election of the Archduke (if it should happen) would necessarily make all other measures founded upon the same principle much more difficult.

Before these instructions arrived Williams had already secured Brühl's assent to the postponement of any declaration of British policy until after the return of the Saxon court from Poland.[1]

During the residence of the court in Poland the long-simmering quarrel between Saxony and Prussia over the *Steuer* came to a new and more acute crisis,[2] and indirectly created another point of divergence between Britain and Saxony. Brühl appealed to his allies, and especially to Russia,[3] for assistance in the event of a Prussian attack, and he also begged France to induce Prussia to reduce her claim to a sum within Saxony's ability

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 14 July.

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, *passim*, especially 417–8, which gives the kernel of the whole controversy; A.E. Saxe, Supplément 2, f. 209 ("Mémoire sur l'affaire de la Steuer," 14 July, 1752) and f. 215 ("Précis de l'affaire de la Steuer," October, 1752). The rights and wrongs of the *Steuer* controversy are beyond the scope of this work, but there is much to be said on each side. Frederick II had set the example to his subjects of buying *Steuer* bills at a discount from non-Prussian creditors whose Governments were less able or less willing to terrorise the Saxon Government, and had then by threats of a military execution forced Saxony to pay up in full. This example his subjects hastened to follow, and there developed a large and lucrative but quite illegitimate trade in *Steuer* bills (*e.g.*, the well-known story of Voltaire's transactions with the Jew Hirsch). The Saxon Government naturally protested against this sharp practice, and tried to limit their obligations under the Treaty of Dresden to bills which had been the *bona fide* property of Prussian subjects, either before the date of the treaty or at some subsequent date to be settled in agreement with Prussia. On the other hand, Saxony could easily have economised on court expenses and thus found money to pay her creditors. In the spring of 1753, for example, Williams reported that the carnival at Dresden had been celebrated in the most lavish style by the court (Williams to Newcastle, 7 February, 1753). Brühl undoubtedly exaggerated the disorder of the Saxon finances, partly in order to frighten importunate creditors by the spectre of bankruptcy, and partly to justify his demanding subsidies with fine impartiality from any court which seemed likely to take the hint.

[3] Add. MSS. 35474, ff. 173–200 (copies of Saxon and Russian papers). Cf. *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 567; ix, 6, 316–8, etc.

to pay. Britain supported Saxony's instances [1] at Versailles [2] and instructed Guy Dickens [3] to invite Bestuzhev, the Russian Great Chancellor, to make "very serious representations" to the King of Prussia and thus prevent him from breaking the peace. Bestuzhev regretted the end of the Northern crisis in 1751, and eagerly seized the new pretext for keeping Prussia in constant dread of Russian attack. He induced Guy Dickens to exceed his instructions by agreeing to his (Bestuzhev's) project of a declaration to be made at Berlin jointly by Russia, Austria, and Britain, to the effect that if Saxony were attacked by Prussia they would at once fulfil the defensive engagements between themselves and Saxony.[4] Brühl was in great good humour when a copy of the proposed declaration reached Dresden, and "wanted words to express his gratitude" to George II. He was deeply chagrined when the British Government hastily disavowed Dickens's action on the ground that Great Britain had no general defensive engagements with Saxony, and therefore could not be a party to the proposed declaration.[5] This rebuff was the more felt at Dresden because Russia refused to make the declaration except in concert with her allies, and Austria, although she had defensive engagements with Saxony, likewise refused [6] to be a party to it.[7]

Williams, realising that Newcastle could not possibly ratify Dickens's conduct, had done his best to prepare Brühl for the inevitable.[8] He pointed out that the making of the joint declaration at Berlin would tend to unite France and Prussia and might even provoke a general war, the brunt of which would fall upon Saxony. Saxony's best policy, he argued, was to enlist French intervention in her favour at Berlin and reduce the friction

[1] A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 198: Despatch to Boyer, 11 May, 1751, etc.; Farges, ii, 113.

[2] Rex's memorial, 9 October, N.S., 1752, in S.P.F., Foreign Ministers, 36; Newcastle to Albemarle, 12, 18 October, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32840, ff. 305, 343.

[3] Newcastle to Dickens, 22 October, O.S., in Add. MSS. 32840, f. 377.

[4] See the relevant papers in Add. MSS. 32841, ff. 113–39. Newcastle was furious: "As to Guy Dickens, he has acted like a madman." (Newcastle to Yorke (private), 9 January, 1753, in Add. MSS. 32833, f. 107 (misplaced in the volume for 1752).)

[5] Newcastle to Williams, 12 January, 1753. Cf. *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 352, 367–8.

[6] *O.S.*, ii, 61.

[7] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 333, 352, 367–8; *Geheimnisse*, i, 219.

[8] Williams to Newcastle, 24 January.

between the rival leagues. Brühl, therefore, was not entirely surprised when the British Government disavowed Dickens's conduct, but he was offended by Newcastle's remark to the Saxon Secretary at London that he wished Guy Dickens had been as circumspect as Pretlach, the Austrian ambassador at Petersburg and a notorious opponent of Saxon influence, who had loudly disapproved of giving Saxony any assurances whatever.[1]

Moreover, St Contest, the new French Foreign Minister, unlike his predecessor Puysieulx,[2] had made a serious effort to get Prussia to accept the Saxon contention in the *Steuer* dispute [3] and remained unshaken by Prussian attempts to convert him.[4] Brühl therefore pointed to the declaration of Prussia's ally, France, that she would not look with an indifferent eye upon any enterprise Prussia might make against Saxony, and urged Britain to make a similar declaration. Newcastle bluntly refused this request,[5] since the relations of Britain and Prussia were already so strained that such a declaration might be interpreted at Berlin as a virtual declaration of war.

Differences were thus arising between Britain and Saxony. The cordial relations which had been established after the subsidy treaty of September 1751, and which had led to Saxon co-operation with Britain in the election negotiations of 1752, were obviously not to be of long duration.

[1] Williams to Keith, 29 December, 1752, in Add. MSS. 35474, f. 153; *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 342.
[2] A.E. Saxe, 41, ff. 189, 198.
[3] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 349–50, 352.
[4] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 378, 385, 409.
[5] Newcastle to Williams, 20 February, 1753.

CHAPTER VII

POLAND: WILLIAMS'S MISSION OF 1752

General character of the Polish-Lithuanian state—Its precarious position in Central Europe—Its constitution and institutions—Domination of the great nobles—The Czartoryski—Their plans of reform opposed by the Potocki—The Diets of 1742–50—Ascendancy of the Czartoryski and their alliance with Brühl—Attitude of Britain and the imperial courts to the succession question—French and Prussian policy in Poland—The Diet of 1752—Rulhière's version of its proceedings—Absence of documentary evidence for Rulhière's narrative—An alternative version—Rupture of the Diet—Partial success of Broglie—Czartoryski approaches to Britain—Conclusion.

POLAND in the eighteenth century was almost as good an example of the non-national state as the Dual Monarchy in the nineteenth century. In the first place, it was a composite state consisting of the kingdom of Poland and the grand duchy of Lithuania, united since 1386 by the marriage of the Grand Duke of Lithuania to the heiress of Poland. Each state, however, retained its own traditions, institutions, and social conditions, although various attempts had been made, notably the Union of Lublin in 1569, to consolidate the two sections of the Polish state. There is little actual evidence of divergence between the two parts in the eighteenth century, but a complete staff of separate officials survived for each part,[1] and there was never, either in fact or in law, a real incorporating union.

Five distinct peoples were included in the Polish-Lithuanian state—Poles, Lithuanians, Russians (in the Eastern provinces conquered by Poland mainly in the seventeenth century), Germans (in West Prussia), and Jews (the predominant element in the few considerable towns). These racial divisions were accentuated by religious hostility between the different peoples. The Poles and Lithuanians were strongly Roman Catholic, the Germans Protestant, and the Russians Orthodox. The Jews, as in every country where they form a considerable section of the population, were equally envied and despised by the other

[1] Only Lithuanian landowners could hold Lithuanian offices, and similarly in Poland. See, for an example of this rule, Farges, ii, 174–5.

sections. The dominant Roman Catholic majority kept alive the spirit of bigotry which was dying out elsewhere in Europe by building up in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century a harsh system of persecution and repression of the religious minorities, which in consequence became disaffected and gave the neighbouring states an excellent pretext for interference in the internal affairs of Poland.

With the exception of Russia, which was still struggling for recognition as a member of the European system of states, Poland [1] was the largest European state in the middle of the eighteenth century. It stretched from the Baltic almost to the Black Sea, and from the Carpathians almost to the Dnieper. Apart from the Carpathians on its south-western frontier, this enormous extent of territory was one vast plain with some minor undulations hardly of sufficient eminence to be dignified by the name of hills. It was, however, very sparsely populated and lay open to invasion on all sides (again excepting the Carpathians).

Its geographical position and past history made the republic of Poland the natural enemy of its neighbours. In its heroic age Poland had annexed large sections of Russian territory which the Tsars were bent on recovering. Later, Poland had become the headquarters of the Counter Reformation in Eastern Europe; Russia was the upholder of the claims of the Greek Church. Finally, the hostility of Poland and Russia was intensified by Peter the Great's policy of westward expansion, which made Poland the main bulwark of Europe against the aggression of Russia.

With the Turks and Tartars on the southern steppes Poland waged an unending border warfare, and even in the middle of the eighteenth century its frontiers in that direction remained indeterminate, chiefly because of the nomadic life of the inhabitants of this "debateable land." But the growing menace of Russia both to Poland and Turkey in the eighteenth century gradually broke down this hostility, and forced Pole and Tartar to make common cause against the common enemy. This remarkable evolution in Polish foreign policy was greatly facilitated by the clever diplomacy of France.

[1] Including Lithuania.

Poland in the seventeenth century had also been largely occupied with wars with Sweden, partly owing to religious hostility, partly to rivalry for control of the Baltic. The crushing defeat of Sweden by Peter the Great removed one formidable enemy to Poland; but the increased power of Russia after the Treaty of Nystadt was a still more serious threat to Polish independence, and Sweden's place was soon taken by Brandenburg-Prussia, which already possessed a secular tradition of enmity to Poland, dating back to the exploits of the Teutonic knights of the fourteenth century, who had forcibly converted and enslaved the Slav dwellers along the Baltic coast of Lithuania.

Of the neighbouring states Austria alone had a tradition of friendship towards Poland, but Austria since 1726 had been the close ally of Russia—Poland's most dangerous enemy—and her vital interests were bound up with the maintenance of this alliance. True, Austria had an instinctive fear that her ally Russia would be an uncomfortable neighbour, and desired to preserve Poland as a buffer between herself and her too powerful and invulnerable ally. But she could not be counted upon to give resolute support, because her major interests in Western Europe might compel her to support Russia in Poland in order to preserve the Russian alliance.

The only other Power which took a serious interest in Polish affairs was France, but the unreliability of French support had been abundantly proved in the crises of 1697 and 1733, when France had made no real effort to preserve Poland from Russian dictation and, after encouraging the Polish 'patriots' in their opposition, had left them to their fate. This was particularly glaring in 1733, when the candidate for the Polish crown, supported by France and the immense majority of Poles, had been Louis XV's father-in-law. Poland, therefore, in the eighteenth century was well-nigh surrounded by dangerous enemies—Russia, Prussia, and the Tartars of the steppes, while her friends were half-hearted and engrossed in conflicting and (to them) more important interests.

The accession of the Saxon House, and the resulting loose personal union of Saxony and Poland, further weakened Poland's international position. Polish resentment at the King's obvious preference for his electorate, and fears that he wished to transform

the personal union into a real union by making the monarchy as powerful in Poland as it was in Saxony, kept Poland in continual ferment, and forced the King, who ought to have taken the lead in opposition to Russia, to rely upon Russia to support him on his precarious throne. Moreover, at least after 1745, Prussian hostility to Saxony intensified Prussian enmity to Poland and drove Augustus, both as king and as elector, into still closer dependence upon Russia.

The prospect of successful resistance to these pressing external dangers was gravely weakened by the defective constitution of Poland. After the death of the last male of the great House of Jagellon in 1572 the monarchy became elective in practice as well as in theory, and the nobles were able to strip successive kings of their prerogatives. Each election was preceded by a contract between the electors and the king elect—known as the *pacta conventa*—and thus each king to secure election had to abandon some prerogative of his predecessor. By the early eighteenth century the only important prerogative left to the King was the right of appointment to all high offices in Church and State, and also to the lesser but still influential and lucrative offices which survived from the feudal epoch—palatinates, castellanies, and starosties (respectively duchies, governorships of castles or towns, and military benefices).[1] This patronage put great power into the King's hands in appearance, but not in reality, because, once appointed, these officials held office for life, subject to removal by decision of the Diet, and could defy the King who had appointed them. Moreover, at every important vacancy, the rival great families massed their forces and intrigued against each other and set the kingdom in uproar. Whichever candidate the King chose, he offended one great party, without any guarantee that his decision in favour of their candidate had won the support of the other for the future. It was very doubtful, therefore, whether the retention of patronage was a real advantage to the monarchy.

The actual government of the country was mainly in the hands of the great officers of State. The Great General of the crown of Poland had almost unfettered control of the army, and frequently carried on a foreign policy of his own in opposition

[1] See Rulhière, i, 15–6.

to that of the King.[1] If a royal decree were unacceptable to the Great Chancellor he refused to affix his seal, without which the decree was invalid. The Great Treasurer had similar powers in finance. And in Lithuania the Great General, Great Chancellor, and Great Treasurer of the Grand Duchy had the like powers. The Senate, whose constitutional function was to advise and assist the King in the task of government, was composed of the archbishops, bishops, palatins, castellans, and certain of the great officers of State.[2] Its actual importance, however, in this period was slight.

Theoretically the supreme power, alike in legislation, taxation, and administration, was vested in the biennial Diet, which met either at Warsaw, the Polish capital, or at Grodno, the Lithuanian capital. Members of the Diet were elected[3] by the whole body of the nobility in local 'dietines,' which gave binding instructions to their delegates and met after each Diet to receive reports from them. The Diet was thus "a congress of mandatories of local assemblies only, each of them limited by the instructions of those who sent him; not a legislative body of unfettered representatives of the nation at large."[4] This assembly in the seventeenth century had gradually stripped the monarchy of its powers; in the eighteenth century it proved its utter incapacity to exercise the powers it had usurped. The impotence of the Diet, both in legislation and in administration, was due chiefly to the gradual development in the later seventeenth century of the *liberum veto*, which enabled a single deputy to suspend its proceedings on all questions by entering a formal protest against one of its decisions. The great officers of State, therefore, became independent both of King and Diet, and the local officials secured almost unlimited powers in their own districts—limited in practice only by their ability to enforce their decisions by the strong hand. The *liberum veto* was

[1] It is reported that Augustus II, when he came to Poland, said that he would have applied for the office of Great General instead of that of King had he known in time. *Cf.* Porter to Williams, 2 April, 1755, in Add. MSS. 35499, f. 15: "The Crown General unfortunately has more credit here [at Constantinople] than the King of Poland."

[2] Rulhière, i, 19. Lists of members of the Senate at each Diet, in A.E. Pologne (for 1752, *tom.* 237, f. 329).

[3] Elections had to be unanimous. The dietines performed other functions, chiefly the appointment to numerous judicial and administrative offices.

[4] Dyboski, *Outlines of Polish History*, 69–70.

supplemented by the *liberum conspiro*. Any party which disliked any measure of the Government possessed the legal right of forming an armed confederation and resisting its application by force. Since these confederations acted on the decision of a majority, while the Diet could act only on a unanimous vote, the Opposition, it has been said, was always organised and the Government disorganised.

The nobles under this anarchic constitution held a monopoly of political power in the republic of Poland. In the eyes of the law every noble, rich or poor, prince or squire, was equal. In fact, the Polish nobility was sharply divided into two classes: (1) a select group of ancient families [1] possessing enormous landed wealth, known as the *panowie*, or magnates, and (2) the remaining nobles (*schlatza*) numbering about 1,500,000, ignorant, superstitious, bigoted, and incapable of self-government. Most of them had insignificant possessions and depended upon one or other of the great families.[2] Their watchword was "Poland stands in and through her anarchy," because constitutional reform would deprive them of part of their political power and consequently of their income.[3] The magnates had in practice an exclusive claim to high and lucrative offices;[4] they lived in feudal state with small armies of retainers and troops of servants; their 'protection,' as in fifteenth-century England, was the only guarantee of law and justice for humbler men; their power in the land was far greater than that of the crowned king at Warsaw, whom they had chosen and whom if it pleased them they could overthrow. They were not merely the 'kingmakers,' but the real rulers of the land—and well they knew it. At the dietines the magnate of the district appeared with hundreds (sometimes thousands) of armed followers, and tried to secure by intimidation and cajolery the undisputed return of his candidate either to the Diet or to the Petrikau tribunal, which was the supreme court of justice. The elections

[1] Potocki, Radziwil, Sapieha, Lubomirski, Czartoryski.

[2] Dyboski, *Polish History*, 70. Comparison might be made in some points between Poland and the Scottish Highlands in the eighteenth century. *Panowie* correspond to the chiefs and *schlatza* to the clansmen.

[3] " La petite noblesse ne se conduit pas par . . . raisons ; il faut la toucher par un endroit qui lui soit personnellement sensible." (A.E. Pologne, 238, f. 21 : Despatch to Broglie, 5 October, 1752.)

[4] Dyboski, *Polish History*, 32.

to the tribunal were the most fiercely contested of all, because whichever party secured a majority on the supreme court had an effective weapon to further its own interests and damage those of its opponents with the appearance of legality. Where two or more great families had lands in the same district competition between them was naturally acute in the dietines, which frequently broke up in disorder and bloodshed. Similar scenes were occasionally seen at the Diet itself, and a fierce contest between rival factions prevented the establishment of the tribunal at Petrikau in 1749,[1] thus depriving Poland of its supreme court of justice for the next twelve months.[2]

Under this anarchic constitution the history of Poland in the first half of the eighteenth century is the struggle of the great families amongst themselves for power and office, hardly affected by the spasmodic efforts of the Saxon kings to recover the control which had slipped from their grasp. Kings die, party leaders change, but the appeals of both for foreign help against their opponents never cease. The Prussian vulture hovers uncertainly on the northern frontier, and over all broods the slowly advancing shadow of Russian despotism.

Head and shoulders above the other party leaders in this doomed and distracted land stood the two Princes Czartoryski,[3] Michael Frederick and his younger brother, Augustus Alexander. The Czartoryski were one of the oldest Lithuanian families, but it was the marriage on 11 June, 1731, of the younger brother, after years of service with the Knights of St John in Austria, to the widow of the Palatin Dehnhof of Poloczk—the wealthiest 'match' of the generation—which first placed the family on an equal footing with the leading Polish families. The elder brother, Michael, thanks to the support of his brother-in-law, the elder Stanislas Poniatowski,[4] and of Field-Marshal Flemming, Augustus II's trusted minister, at the early age of thirty-eight received the office of Vice-Chancellor of Lithuania. A few months after his marriage the younger brother was given

[1] Only in five cases was the validity of the election of the deputies undisputed : the quorum was seven.

[2] Poniatowski, 26–8 ; Roepell, 78.

[3] Rulhière gives lifelike but not altogether reliable portraits, i, 224 ff. *Cf.* Poniatowski, 16–8, 50–5 ; Farges, ii, especially 147 ; Roepell, 50 ff.

[4] Lelewel, *Geschichte Polens*, 205–6.

the office of Palatin of Russia, which was of great value to him as most of his wife's possessions lay in this province. Both princes supported Stanislas Leczinski in the crisis of 1733, but, thanks to Russian intervention, were speedily received back into favour by Augustus III, completely cured of the belief that French support would enable them to carry out the constitutional reforms which Poland so greatly needed. Thanks to court favour, their capacity for organisation, and their politic conciliation of the *schlatza*, they were soon recognised as the most influential of the Polish magnates.[1] The older families bitterly resented the growing power of what they regarded as a *parvenu* family, and tended to draw together in opposition to them.

But the influence of the Czartoryski grew steadily. While the other great families plunged deeper and deeper into debt, the wealth of the Czartoryski steadily increased, thanks to good management of their estates and to the shower of offices which court favour gave to them and their adherents. Moreover, they found means, by lucrative bribes, which their influence with Brühl enabled them to offer, and still more by marriage alliances, to detach from the Opposition some of its ablest leaders.[2]

It would, however, be false to represent the party struggles in Poland as due merely to selfish interests and the spirit of faction. The majority of the old families headed by the Primate and the Great General of the Crown, both members of the House of Potocki, realised hardly less clearly than the Czartoryski the urgent need for constitutional reform.[3] But they feared that the limitation of the *liberum veto* would enable the Crown to control the Diet by judicious exercise of patronage, and thus establish a despotism on the ruins of Polish liberty. Before

[1] All important questions were settled in a family council of the two brothers and the elder Poniatowski along with his wife and the mother of the two princes (Poniatowski, 51–3). Boyer testifies to the success of this organisation (A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 329, 29 August, 1751): "Les Czartorinski auront [toujours] avantage . . . tant qu'ils agiront comme il font par sistème et d'une manière si bien combinée."

[2] Thus Prince Michael Sapieha was married to a daughter of the Vice-Chancellor of Lithuania; John Clement Branicki, Great General of Poland, to the elder Poniatowski's daughter; Prince Lubomirski to the daughter of the Palatin of Russia.

[3] Rulhière, i, 218–21.

consenting to the limitation of the *liberum veto* they wished to transfer the exercise of patronage from the King to a standing council of nobles. A tentative proposal in this direction was easily defeated in the Diet of 1742. Henceforth the Potocki contented themselves with thwarting the reforming schemes of their opponents, although they continued to hope for a favourable opportunity to carry out their projects with the support of France and the concurrence of Prussia.

While the conservative Potocki, despite the warnings of the past two crises, continued to follow the obsolete policy of dependence on France, the Czartoryski looked towards the rising power of Russia. They recognised frankly that the fate of the republic of Poland lay in Russia's hands. Their immediate object was to make Poland a strong, constitutionally governed state. Their ultimate objects no man can tell, but they were apparently Slavophils before their time. Probably from the very beginning they intended to set a member of their family on the throne of a reformed Poland,[1] which would preserve an autonomous and prosperous existence by acting as a Russian outlook tower into Europe. But since court favour was essential to enable them to carry out their schemes for constitutional reform, they carefully concealed these designs and made common cause with Count Brühl.

The first plan of reform put forward in 1744 by the Czartoryski centred on the strengthening of the army in numbers, discipline, and equipment. The Prussian system was proposed as a model. To raise the necessary funds a complete reorganisation of taxation, and especially the abolition of the exemptions enjoyed by the nobles, was proposed. To increase the population available for military service marriages were to be encouraged by the State, and the number and wealth of religious houses considerably reduced. Finally, the *liberum veto* should be limited in operation, the law courts and administration reformed, particularly by payment to all officials of adequate salaries, which would remove one main cause of corruption. The adoption of these reforms would give Poland law and order, cause foreign states to seek her alliance, and restore

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 178.

her ancient glory, sadly tarnished since the days of John Sobieski.[1]

These proposals had no chance of acceptance by the Diet, and impaired the popularity of the Czartoryski with the lesser nobles. In 1745 a duel between the elder Poniatowski, a leading member of the Czartoryski party, and Adam Tarlo, Palatin of Lublin, in which the latter met his death, further weakened their position, and the Potocki gained the upper hand in the Diets of 1746 and 1748. The Czartoryski could no longer count securely upon the favour of the court—once their main asset—because Count Mniszek, the Little Marshal of Poland, was insidiously undermining their influence with Brühl,[2] in order to oust them from their leadership of the court party. In 1750 he strengthened his position by marrying Brühl's daughter, but at first he was content to share the favour of the court with the Czartoryski.[3] Brühl himself, on the strength of a faked genealogy, had secured naturalisation from the corrupt tribunal of Petrikau in 1748; he could now hold lands and offices in Poland, and began to keep to himself and his relations many of the lucrative offices which he had hitherto sold to the highest bidder or given away in accordance with the Czartoryski's suggestions. Although there was no open rupture till 1754, Brühl's jealousy of his overpowerful allies was patent,[4] and even in his first visit to Poland in 1750 Williams had found difficulty in mediating between Brühl and the Czartoryski.

The disruption of the Petrikau tribunal, however, made a great impression on Brühl, and he could only hope to carry the much-needed reforms through the Diet with the assistance of the Czartoryski. Williams, already well known to both parties, busied himself with the work of reconciliation; but there is no evidence to show how far his mediation was responsible for the preservation of the Brühl-Czartoryski alliance. Brühl, however, in the extraordinary Diet of 1750 (summoned in August, instead

[1] Farges, ii, 41, 89. The programme is printed in full in *Preuss. Staats.*, ii, 301–11, under the title "Letter from a Polish Nobleman [Stanislas Poniatowski] to a Friend."

[2] *Cf.* A.E. Saxe, 41, ff. 402b, 413b (Brühl's conversations with Boyer, reported in Boyer's despatches of 6, 18 October, 1751).

[3] Poniatowski, 39; Williams to Newcastle, 25 November, 1752.

[4] Cf. *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 66, 85, for reports of growing alienation between Brühl and the Czartoryski (March, 1752).

of October, to deal with the rupture of the Petrikau tribunal), for the first time seriously supported a programme of reform incorporating some of the points of the ambitious Czartoryski plan of 1744. The Diet was to be transformed into a confederation, which would enable it to act by majority vote, in order to increase taxation and to prohibit the use of the *liberum veto* in fiscal questions [1] in future Diets. These proposals were never even discussed by the Diet, because the Potocki party questioned the eligibility of the Marshal of the Diet selected by the court on the ground that he was a senator and had only resigned *pro forma* the office of palatin, which gave him senatorial rank.[2] One of their adherents then entered his protest at the register court of Warsaw against all further proceedings of the Diet and fled from the town. The next day the Diet, although it could discuss no business, solemnly remained in session in the hope that the deputy would return and withdraw his *liberum veto*. Needless to say, he did not, and the Diet of 1750, like its predecessors, came to an untimely end.

The deaths in rapid succession of the three leading members of the House of Potocki deprived the Opposition of its ablest chiefs and left vacant the two leading offices in Poland. The office of Great General was given to John Clement Branicki,[3] the son-in-law of the elder Poniatowski, and at this time the ally of the Czartoryski; that of Primate to Adam Komorowski, one of their trusted followers.[4] These and other appointments, including Michael Czartoryski's promotion to the Great Chancellorship of Lithuania, gave the Czartoryski a virtual monopoly of the high offices of State and a favourable opportunity to carry out part of their reforming plans in conjunction with Brühl, who regarded these reforms as a necessary step towards retaining the Polish crown in the Saxon family. Russian support was already practically assured; British approval (and so far as Williams was concerned no line can be drawn between approval and support)

[1] Immediately after the rupture of the Petrikau tribunal the Saxon court had vainly tried to secure Austrian approval for the abolition, or at least the limitation, of the *liberum veto* (Beer, cxix).

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 23 September, 1750; Farges, ii, 118, 141. The Potocki naturally seized every opportunity to champion the rights of the lesser nobles—one of whom was normally chosen as Marshal.

[3] Williams to Newcastle, 2 July, 1751, and 11 June, 1752.

[4] *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 178.

had been purchased cheaply by the appearance of support in the election of a King of the Romans; Austria, even although she was on bad terms with Saxony, would hardly oppose the policy of her two allies. Moreover, Austro-Saxon relations had considerably improved since Flemming's mission to Vienna, and the Empress-Queen listened favourably, although without committing herself, to the Saxon scheme for securing the continued union of Saxony and Poland which Flemming sketched in outline. She insisted, however, that a definite plan must be elaborated in concert with Russia.[1]

But France and Prussia had to be reckoned with. Frederick was fully informed of Saxon schemes, and did not scruple to attribute to the Saxon Government designs which it had never contemplated in order to alarm France and thus induce her to take a more active part in Polish politics.[2] In particular he pressed the French Government to give energetic instructions to the Duc de Broglie,[3] one of Conti's intimates, who was destined to play in Poland the double part of French ambassador and representative of Conti. That the French Government saw through Frederick's interested advice is proved by their official instructions to Broglie. These [4] relate almost exclusively to Polish affairs and show a complete reversal in French policy from that of Argenson. While in Saxony Broglie's "rôle doit être celui d'observateur éclairé et vigilant," in Poland he was to prevent the success of the Diet, secretly concerting the necessary steps with the leaders of the Opposition, but without taking the Prussian minister into the secret. He was to oppose the Lorraine candidature, to assure the Poles that France would support any candidate freely elected by them, but not to commit his Government to the support of any particular candidate. His duties as Conti's representative were much more arduous. He was to build up the French party, which had sunk to a very low ebb,

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 454–5 (based on Flemming's intercepted despatches to Brühl).

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 100, 102, 115–6, 129.

[3] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 93, 111. Broglie's character is best described by Poniatowski, 209–10: "C'était un petit homme pétri de salpêtre, fier, impérieux, tracassier, inquiet outre mesure . . . mais rempli d'esprit laborieux, quoiqu' aimant le plaisir, voulant régenter exclusivement la Saxe et la Pologne."

[4] Dated 14 July, 1752, in Farges, ii, 111–26. *Cf.* A.E. Saxe, Supplément 2, f. 199 ("Remarques sur l'Instruction pour le C^te^ de Broglie"), dated 7 June, 1752.

to prepare the way with its leaders for Conti's election at the next vacancy, and by repeated exhortations induce the French ministers to take a greater and more active interest in Polish affairs.[1]

Prussian policy in Poland was like the official policy of France —primarily negative, but Frederick agreed with Conti that a strong Opposition should be built up in Poland. His immediate aim was to break successive Diets with as little disturbance as possible.[2] Nothing, the Polish constitution being as it was, could be simpler, and to make doubly sure of success Maltzahn received considerable sums to distribute among the Polish patriots.[3] Frederick, however, was not satisfied with this hand-to-mouth policy, and was eager to involve France more deeply in the affairs of Eastern Europe. When it was suggested to him by Scheffer, formerly Swedish envoy to France, that France would welcome a confidential overture from him for joint action in Poland,[4] he immediately wrote an autograph letter to Louis XV,[5] urging him to forestall the Polish designs of France's enemies by persuading the Sultan to declare war on the two Empresses. This would cripple Austria and Russia financially, gravely weaken their armies, and might easily lead to coldness between the two Empresses, such as had followed the campaigns of 1737–9. Even if Austria and Russia were successful they could gain nothing but the barren kingdom of Serbia, while their financial and military exhaustion would place the balance of Europe in the hands of France, establish the liberties of Poland on a secure basis, and preserve the peace of Europe for years to come. This chimerical project, based on the two fundamental misconceptions that Britain would stand aside and allow France to dominate the Continent, and that Turkey was still a match for the two imperial courts, was politely shelved by the French Government.[6] But it continued in a modified form to be Frederick's ideal in the following years, and explains his constant attempts to increase his influence over the Porte.[7] But the support of

[1] See Conti's letter to Broglie in Farges, ii, 127–33. *Cf.* Broglie, *Secret du Roi*, i, 38.

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 211, 215, 231, 252.

[3] *Ibid.*, 214–5.

[4] *Ibid.*, 219–20.

[5] *Ibid.*, 232–6, 286 ff.

[6] *Ibid.*, 289–91, 330.

[7] His later attitude was not that Turkey should declare war, but that by threats Turkey should prevent Austro-Russian domination in Poland. (*Pol. Corr.*, ix, 222 ; x, 426, 441–2, 468 ; xi, 81, 158.)

France was the basis of the whole scheme, and Frederick therefore redoubled his attempts to alarm France over the affairs of Poland. While continuing to press for a Turkish declaration of war on the imperial courts, he offered to support any candidate for the Polish throne chosen by France.[1] Thus Broglie and Frederick II had a common interest in urging the adoption of a more active policy in Poland upon the French Government. Failing to make any visible impression at Versailles by his own exertions, Frederick sought to enlist the support of Broglie,[2] who was known to have great influence there, in securing more active French assistance to thwart what he believed to be Austro-Russian policy in Poland.

On their way to the Diet at distant Grodno the Saxon court, the Diplomatic Corps, and many of the leading Poles spent some days at the Great General Branicki's palace near Bialystock. Under the influence of Mokranowski, a resolute and enterprising Francophil, Branicki was already in close touch with the French party.[3] Williams hoped to make up the differences between Branicki and the Czartoryski and prevent him going over entirely to the French party. According to Mokranowski, Gross and Williams were so foolish as to reveal to the Great General the arrangements to be made for securing the succession;[4] but, whatever the extent of the confidences made by Williams to the Great General, the latter showed no disposition to return wholeheartedly to the Czartoryski party.

Rulhière's vivid imagination and ability to give verisimilitude to his inventions,[5] combined with Broglie's love of the dramatic and the picturesque,[6] has firmly established a wholly misleading account of the Diet of 1752. In this version Williams and Broglie appear as the principals, intent on winning Polish support for their respective courts in the next war. Knowing that the Diet will be broken up, Williams arranges with the Czartoryski to form a confederation and carry through their plans by force—establishing at a single stroke the effective supremacy of the monarchy in Poland, and a firm alliance between Poland, the

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 288. [2] *Ibid.*, 210, 215, 231.
[3] A.E. Pologne, 237: Castéra's report of 14 June, f. 206; Broglie's despatch of 17 September, f. 365.
[4] A.E. Pologne, 237, f. 403: Broglie's despatch of 16 October.
[5] *Rulhière*, i, 238–53. [6] *Secret du Roi*, i, 36 ff.

imperial courts, and the Maritime Powers. Everything at first goes according to their plans: the Diet is broken and the Czartoryski manifesto establishing a confederation is signed by the vast majority of the Polish notables, even by the Great General Branicki, who was still hesitating between the Czartoryski and the Opposition. Suddenly, as crowds of the lesser nobles are signing the manifesto, Mokranowski pushes through the jostling crowd, seizes the manifesto, rushes with it to the French ambassador, and then on the advice of Broglie returns to the Great General and convinces him of his mistake in signing it. The Great General throws the document into the fire and embraces Mokranowski, while the crowd of nobles applaud, and Williams and the Czartoryski, true to the best traditions of melodrama, slink from the chamber vowing vengeance.

There appears to be no satisfactory documentary evidence for this picturesque story. The crux of the matter is the text of the manifesto, and fortunately this document did not perish in the flames, but, phœnix-like, has survived to confute the fabrications of its destroyers. One copy exists in the Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs;[1] another copy, which shows merely verbal differences, has been printed by Roepell[2] from the Prussian Archives. Neither copy makes any mention of the formation of a confederation. The opening passage runs thus:

> Nous considérant que notre patrie demande un secours que la mauvaise issue des diettes ne luy permet pas d'obtenir . . . sommes déterminés à rendre la présente protestation publique afin que les siècles présens et à venir soient instruits de la sincérité de nos intentions,

and concludes with a peroration about the ancient laws and the Roman Catholic religion. The Potocki faction seized upon the opening words and interpreted them as meaning the immediate formation of a confederation in the hope of discrediting the Czartoryski with the *schlatza* and of increasing the coolness between them and Brühl. Broglie at first accepted this story.[3] The Czartoryski, he says, drew up a manifesto which would have "tout l'effet d'une confédération; mais dans lequel cependant le mot de confédération ne se trouveroit pas dans la crainte

[1] A.E. Pologne, 238, f. 243. [2] Appendix IV, 235–7.
[3] A.E. Pologne, 238, f. 246: Broglie's despatch of 28 October.

d'épouvanter le Roi de Pologne . . . et pour parvenir plus facilement à le faire signer par la plupart des sénateurs," so as to intimidate the Opposition. As soon as a majority of senators and nuncios had signed, the confederation would have been formed. Subsequently Broglie was driven to qualify the undiluted Mokranowski version of the story. Once the paper was signed, he says, the Czartoryski could have proceeded to carry the alliance with Russia "du moins à la Diette prochaine qui auroit peut-être été avancée et qui auroit été assemblée sous le lien de la confédération"—thus admitting that the danger of a confederation was prospective and not actual. Maltzahn's despatches [1] confirm those of Broglie, but add nothing of importance.

The readiness of Broglie and Maltzahn to accept the Potocki version was very natural, especially in view of the rumours customarily raised before each Diet, that the Czartoryski were planning a confederation in order to carry out their reforms.[2] Probably the original source of the whole incident is to be found in the schemes of the Czartoryski, Brühl, and Williams for securing the succession, which were well known in Poland, and on this occasion gave an air of verisimilitude to the customary rumours. But neither the Saxon court nor the Czartoryski leaders would have dared to form a confederation unless assured of the armed support of the imperial courts. Negotiations were proceeding with both of these courts, but no definite plan of campaign had yet been formed.[3] Quite apart from the tergiversations of Brühl and the unwillingness of the Anglo-Imperial allies to pledge themselves to the execution of the scheme, the Czartoryski leaders themselves had not yet agreed upon a definite line of action in the succession question.[4] A premature attempt to form a confederation would have ruined everything.

Although it is clear that the Czartoryski plans were not intended for immediate execution, Mokranowski may have been perfectly sincere in his interpretation of the manifesto at a time when the spirit of faction was at its height and distorted rumours

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 260–1, 269.

[2] *Ibid.*, 211, 214; A.E. Pologne, 237, ff. 206b, 211: Castéra's reports of 14, 24 June.

[3] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 434–5.

[4] See the report of a conversation between Great Treasurer Flemming and the Great Chancellor of Lithuania, sent by Williams to Newcastle along with his paper of 16/27 June, 1752.

of the plans of the Czartoryski were current. It is, however, more probable that he and some of the other Potocki leaders deliberately misinterpreted the Czartoryski manifesto in order to gain party advantages. "Un avantage," Broglie reports,[1]

> bien réel que le parti patriotique va tirer de cet événement c'est de brouiller tout-à-fait le Grand Général de la couronne avec les Czartorinski [and to reduce his confidence in the Saxon court].

The perusal of Broglie's despatches suggests further that the Potocki leaders had their personal as well as their party advantage in view. On 17 October[2] Broglie reported that Mokranowski had tried to persuade him that the Czartoryski were planning to form a Diet of Confederation immediately. Broglie was, rightly, sceptical. "J'ai beaucoup de peine," he wrote,

> à le [Mokranowski] croire, Sa M^té^ Polonoise et son ministre n'ayant pas assez de fermeté pour entreprendre une chose qui pourroit avoir des suites assez sérieuses ni assez d'argent pour soutenir le parti pour lequel elle se déclareroit.

Three days later Broglie reported[3] a disagreeable conversation with another Potocki chief, the Palatin of Belz, who was so importunate in demanding bribes that Broglie believed he was exaggerating the difficulty of breaking the Diet in order to enhance the value of his services. Broglie, therefore, stiffened his attitude towards the Palatin of Belz and the other Potocki chiefs. What more natural, then, in the state of political morality in eighteenth-century Poland, than that the Potocki leaders should seize the chance offered by the Czartoryski manifesto to convince the sceptical ambassador of the risk of a confederation and induce him to reward their services in averting the danger at a high rate?

The real story of the Diet of 1752 is drab and uninteresting, but typical in both respects of most of the Diets of Augustus III's reign. It was evident to Williams, weeks before the Diet met on 1 October, that it would be as fruitless as its predecessors.[4] Brühl, in spite of his instances at Hanover on Polish affairs, gave the Czartoryski no support in their endeavours to exclude their opponents from the Diet, and for a time it seemed likely

[1] Broglie's despatch of 28 October (A.E. Pologne, 238, f. 246).
[2] A.E. Pologne, 238, f. 142.
[3] A.E. Pologne, 238, f. 163.
[4] Williams to Newcastle, 2, 16 September.

that he would give the vacant office of Vice-Chancellor of Lithuania to the Potocki candidate.[1] The Chancellor of Lithuania's threats and Williams's mediation brought Brühl to heel, but the discord among the King's friends and the presence of energetic French and Prussian ministers acting closely together,[2] instructed to break the Diet, supplied with ample bribes,[3] and armed with the baseless story that Gross and Williams had orders to secure Poland's accession to the treaty of 1746,[4] insured the rupture of the Diet despite the large majority of the Czartoryski.

The first step in the proceedings of the Diet [5] was the election of a Marshal—the only decision in which a majority vote was sufficient. The Czartoryski nominee was chosen without a division. The Potocki faction, according to Williams, did not wish to reveal their numerical weakness,[6] but Broglie explains that he dissuaded the Potocki from opposition to the election of the Marshal, since this might have led to a violent rupture of the Diet and have offended the King of Poland. After the election of the Marshal the nuncios came up to the Senate and ranged themselves behind the chairs of their respective palatins. The King then proposed to the Diet the subjects for its future deliberation. In 1752 the great controversial proposal of previous Diets—the augmentation of the army—was virtually abandoned by the court. The two main proposals were reforms in the administration of justice and the settlement of various frontier disputes between Russia and Lithuania. A more important point than either was the proposal that the unanimous vote of the Diet on each point should have immediately the force of law,

[1] Poniatowski, 64 ; Williams to Keith, 6 September, in Add. MSS. 35474, f. 44.

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 237.

[3] Details in Broglie's despatches, especially Paper A attached to his despatch of 21 December, in A.E. Pologne, 239 ; *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 214–6, 258. *Cf.* Waliszewski's article in *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, tom. i (1888).

[4] The denials of Brühl, Gross, and Williams were naturally disbelieved by the Opposition (Roepell, 92–3 ; *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 231) ; even the King failed to convince Broglie that the story was without foundation (A.E. Pologne, 238, f. 86 : Broglie's despatch of 10 October ; *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 247).

[5] The following account is based chiefly on the semi-official "Journals de la Diette" (A.E. Pologne, 238, ff. 11, 13, 15, 17, 60, etc.), and on the despatches of Williams, Broglie, and Maltzahn.

[6] Williams grossly exaggerated the numerical strength of the Czartoryski. *Cf.* the detailed analysis of the sympathies of the nuncios in A.E. Pologne, 237, f. 396.

and its validity should not be impaired by the application of the *liberum veto* to any question subsequently raised. This had been included in the universals (or bulls) summoning the dietines,[1] but had aroused a storm of opposition, and was therefore dropped by the court, although, had the Diet held, it could have been brought up by some follower of the Czartoryski.

The next step after the hearing of the royal proposals was the reading of the *pacta conventa*, after which any nuncio was at liberty to denounce any violation of the privileges of his house or of his order. Then the nuncios returned to their own house, and, in 1752 as in the previous Diet, continued to complain of real or imaginary grievances instead of discussing the royal proposals. The activity of the Diet was suspended on 16 October by the protest of two deputies against the giving of the starosty of Warsaw to Brühl's son—a Protestant—and on the 24th another deputy, "a person of no sort of consequence but an immediate dependant on . . . the Palatin of Belz," formally broke up the Diet by entering in the register court of Grodno his protest against its further proceedings until certain grievances [2] detailed in his protest had been redressed.

Broglie had succeeded in the two points of his official instructions—the prevention of Polish accession to the Treaty of the Two Empresses and the rupture of the Diet. But the first point was never proposed either by the Czartoryski or by Williams and Gross, since it formed no part of their programme. In regard to the second, Williams and Brühl attributed the rupture of the Diet to French and Prussian bribery and intrigue, but the Potocki party, although they eagerly accepted the proffered bribes, would have done what they did in any case. Moreover, by allowing himself to be unduly influenced by the Prussian minister at Grodno,[3] by insisting on privileges which his predecessors had never claimed,[4] and by remaining at Warsaw for weeks after the departure of the court, distributing

[1] Benoît to Frederick II, 22 July, quoted in Roepell, 91.

[2] Copies appended to Williams's letter to Newcastle of 25 November and to Broglie's despatch of 24 October, in A.E. Pologne, 238, f. 204.

[3] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 237, 272.

[4] Williams to Newcastle, 25 November. Even the Queen of Poland, a resolute adherent of France, complained of Broglie's conduct in a letter to her daughter (Roepell, 97).

bribes to the Opposition, Broglie had antagonised Brühl quite unnecessarily and contrary to the spirit of his official instructions.

In the secret part of his duties the new ambassador played at first a very sorry part. Castéra, the French Secretary at Warsaw, who had all the threads of French policy in the East in his hands, died suddenly just before Broglie reached Warsaw.[1] Now Broglie's secret instructions [2] (as distinct from the official instructions, which made no mention of reorganising the French party in Poland to secure the election of a French candidate) were apparently given by word of mouth; Broglie was simply told to depend upon Castéra, up to now the sole agent of the "King's secret" in Eastern Europe. Thus Castéra's death gravely hampered Broglie in the execution of the secret part of his mission, since he did not know which members of the Potocki party were in the "King's secret." [3] His one important success was the conversion, after the conclusion of the Diet, of the Great General Branicki, who had hitherto been a half-hearted ally of the Czartoryski. He proved equally half-hearted in his new alliance, but by reason of his office was a valuable recruit. More important than this success was the growing tendency towards a *rapprochement* between Brühl and the Potocki [4]—though here Broglie can claim practically no credit, since he was personally on bad terms with Brühl.[5]

As British minister Williams's sole duty in Poland was to report on the actual position of affairs there, so as to enable his Government to form an opinion upon the practicability of securing in advance the Saxon succession and preventing a fresh war of the Polish succession. He returned from Poland convinced of the futility of Brühl's Polish policy. Brühl had done little to influence elections at the dietines; he and the King had hardly concealed their delight at the early rupture of the Diet,

[1] Thomelin's despatch in A.E. Pologne, 237, f. 341 ; Broglie, *Secret du Roi*, i, 180 ; *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 209.

[2] The so-called secret instructions of 26 September, 1752, did not reach Broglie until after the conclusion of the Diet.

[3] *Cf.* Williams to Keith, 6 September, in Add. MSS. 35474, f. 44 : Castéra's "death will put the new French ambassador under great difficulties, who (*sic*) is entirely referred to him for the state of affairs in Poland and who by his death cannot avoid being very much at a loss how to act."

[4] Broglie's despatch of 4 December, 1752, in A.E. Pologne, 239, f. 30.

[5] Despatch to Broglie of 18 December, 1752, in A.E. Pologne, 239, f. 59.

which enabled the court to return earlier to Hubertusburg for the autumn shooting season;[1] and so eager were they to get away from Grodno that they refused to hold a *Senatus Concilium* there.[2] This refusal meant that no minister could be sent to Russia to settle the numerous frontier disputes, since only the Senate could appoint a minister below the rank of ambassador. The existence of these disputes, chiefly over Cossack incursions[3] and Poland's refusal to surrender Russian refugees, was a weapon in the hands of France and Prussia to foment bad feeling between Poland and Russia. Yet the Saxon court, although its retention of the Polish throne depended on the support of Russia, obligingly left the weapon in their hands. Naturally, when Brühl had neither time nor inclination to attend to such questions of routine, nothing was done to forward the Saxon succession to the crown. Brühl, in fact, repeatedly disclaimed any connection with the intrigues of Williams, Gross, and the Czartoryski, and even censured their conduct as being likely to disturb the tranquillity of Poland.[4]

Brühl's conduct confirmed Williams in his opinion that if anything effective was to be done in Poland it must be in concert with the Czartoryski and not with Brühl. The Czartoryski, on their side, were eager to enlist British support. In the first place, British influence at Dresden was now at its height; if exerted in their favour it would be a valuable asset.[5] Secondly, Russia, with her corrupt and inefficient Government and her preoccupation in the Northern crisis, had hitherto given them little effective support, and they hoped that British influence at Petersburg would induce Russia to pay greater attention to the affairs of Poland. The Czartoryski were particularly anxious at this time to have British influence at Petersburg behind them, since it was by no means certain that Bestuzhev, left to himself, would support them against the Saxon Government[6] in the event of the rupture of their increasingly precarious alliance with Brühl. While Brühl was jealous of their power, they

[1] Poniatowski, 66.

[2] Williams to Newcastle, 25 November; A.E. Pologne, 239, f. 15. Cf. *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 271–2, 276.

[3] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 334.

[4] A.E. Pologne, 237, f. 429b: Broglie's despatch of 16 October. The Austrian minister likewise held aloof and expressed disapproval of their actions (A.E. Pologne, 239, f. 15: Broglie's despatch of 3 December, 1752).

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 6 December.

[6] *Pol. Corr.*, vii, 291–2.

complained to Williams "bitterly of the weakness, inactivity, and corruption of their own court." [1] Britain, moreover, was negotiating with Russia for the maintenance of a Russian army on the frontiers of Prussia. This force would be invaluable to the Czartoryski in case of a vacancy in the Polish throne, either in preventing Prussian intervention or, if necessary, in resisting it.[2] Finally, they had hopes of direct British support.[3] All the precedents were against this, but, under Newcastle's impulsion and Williams's inspiration, Britain had lately been interfering in questions which Walpole had considered entirely out of her orbit, and Williams's conversation doubtless encouraged their hopes of active British intervention in Polish affairs, such as Newcastle and Williams had already brought about in the politics of the Empire. Britain since 1749 had imitated the old French policy of giving subsidies to the German princes in time of peace. Might she not be induced to take a further step in imitation of her natural enemy and give protection and even subsidies to Polish party chiefs? The Czartoryski leaders therefore loudly professed admiration for George II,[4] desire "to lay themselves at His Majesty's feet," and enthusiasm for the Saxon succession to the Polish crown.

Although in outward appearance the Diet of 1752 differed in no way from previous Diets, the close alliance of Williams with the Czartoryski and their preparations for the next Diet,[5] on the

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 25 November.

[2] They "are very uneasy about their future prospects. They dread the King of Prussia getting a further footing in Poland" (Williams to Newcastle, 25 November).

[3] See letter from Flemming, Great Treasurer of Lithuania, on behalf of his party, to Newcastle, dated 8 December, 1752, in S.P.F., Poland: "We hope as our views must be agreeable to England that we shall have England's support" (translated).

[4] It is worth noting that the son of the Palatin of Russia was directed by his father to apply to the English ministers at all the courts which he visited in his grand tour (Yorke to Newcastle (private), 12 January, 1753, in Add. MSS. 38341, f. 99). The young Stanislas Poniatowski behaved in the same fashion, and Frederick II suspected that his object in visiting London was to win British support for the Czartoryski (*Pol. Corr.*, x, 47).

[5] Williams confesses to Keith (8 November, in Add. MSS. 35474, f. 115) that since coming to Poland he had given himself "much pains to very little purpose." *Cf.* Broglie's account of his activities (A.E. Pologne, 237, f. 403, 16 October): "Il s'adresse à tout le monde; il est devenu plus caressant qu'aucun italien . . . je l'ai vu parler en particulier aux jeunes princes dont l'influence est . . . médiocre et jusques aux femmes de chambre de la Reine; il ne néglige rien pour les séduire."

one hand, and the energetic efforts of the French ambassador to reorganise and animate the French party in Poland, on the other, embittered the old feuds and increased the disturbances in that distracted and unhappy land. Williams and Broglie, unknown to themselves, were serving the interests, not of their own courts, still less of their Polish allies, but of Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Meantime, until the time came for action, the three Eastern courts were content to remain spectators, but by no means disinterested spectators, of the growing anarchy in Poland.

CHAPTER VIII

WILLIAMS'S MISSION TO VIENNA (1753)

Williams is sent to Vienna on a special mission—His instructions—Increasing hostility between Britain and Prussia—The election project—The barrier negotiations—Necessity of strengthening the bonds between Britain and Austria—The Polish succession—Alarm of Frederick at Williams's mission—Williams's conversations with the Empress-Queen and Kaunitz—Futility of his visit to Vienna—Decline of the old system—Williams returns to England by way of Dresden, Hanover, and The Hague.

WILLIAMS spent the winter of 1752–3 at Dresden, and doubtless found life there very dull after the novelty and excitement of his mission to Poland. He had long been eager to visit Vienna,[1] and was delighted to receive on 4 March, 1753, not only the King's permission to make the trip, for which he had asked, but also instructions [2] to undertake a secret mission to the Austrian court.

Newcastle had long been dissatisfied with Keith, the resident British minister at Vienna. He believed that Keith, overawed by the haughty airs of the Austrian ministers and charmed by "the most bewitching natural eloquence" [3] of the Empress-Queen, did not press the British point of view upon them with sufficient vigour. In 1752 Hyndford had been sent to impress upon Maria Theresa the necessity of making some sacrifice to secure the election of her son as King of the Romans. His gentle remonstrances had completely failed to influence the Austrian court. Newcastle therefore decided to try a combination of Scottish caution and reserve, represented by Keith, and Welsh impetuosity and outspokenness, represented by Williams, and to enable Williams to speak the more freely he was not given an official character.[4]

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 7 August, 1752 ; Williams to Newcastle (private), 25 January, 1753, in Add. MSS. 32842, f. 262.

[2] In the form of a private letter from Newcastle, dated 20 February (in P.R.O. ; copy sent to Keith, in Add. MSS. 35475, f. 42). Williams was instructed to act in everything in concert with Keith and to avoid giving him the least jealousy.

[3] Keith to Holderness, 27 June, 1755, in Add. MSS. 32856, f. 504.

[4] Newcastle to Williams (private), 20 February, in Add. MSS. 32843, f. 28.

In a word Williams's mission was to restore to the Anglo-Austrian alliance the spirit of cordiality and co-operation which had been lacking since the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. Newcastle's instructions were emphatic on this point:

> Endeavour to establish a thorough confidence with us; but upon the foot of equality. If we are to act upon all occasions in concert, they *shall* do so also. . . . The conduct of the Austrian ministers is astonishing. We wish to be well with them. We show it by desiring to do their business; and rather than owe any obligation to us they will obstruct their own business and do *that* of their greatest enemies France and Prussia: when if we would (as I hope we never shall) follow their example the House of Austria and the common cause would be no more thought of. This is a real truth. I don't know whether my friend Keith has courage enough to tell them so, but if he has not I hope you will. You have a *manner* when you please; and pray exert it now.[1]

British interests imperatively demanded the restoration of the Anglo-Austrian alliance on a sound basis. The old-standing quarrel with Prussia was coming rapidly to a head. Difficulties with France in India and America grew daily more threatening. Newcastle doubted whether Pompadour pacifism, which he conciliated by a steady stream of pineapples from the far-famed glass-houses of Claremont, would triumph over the aggressive policy of France's representatives in the colonies and the restiveness of Prussia, alarmed by the encircling policy of the imperial and Hanoverian courts.

In addition to the herculean task of removing the misunderstandings and jealousies which had arisen between Austria and Britain since 1748, Williams was entrusted with three main commissions. Firstly, in regard to the quarrels of Britain and Prussia over the Silesian loan and the Prussian ships, he was to secure Austria's approval of Newcastle's statement of the British case in refutation of the Prussian "exposition des motifs." [2] If these disputes involved Britain in war with Prussia, or led to a Prussian attack upon Hanover, Williams was to find out what the court of Vienna would do and, if necessary, induce them to promise support. If the Austrian ministers took the opportunity to urge once again that Britain should subsidise Russia

[1] Newcastle to Williams (private), 20 February, in Add. MSS. 32843, f. 28.
[2] Printed by Satow in chapter vii.

Williams was to insist that Russia, like Austria, was bound to assist Britain and Hanover (if attacked in a British quarrel) under existing treaties, but to assure them that if Russia reduced her demands to a reasonable figure then the British Government would consider the practicability of giving a subsidy.

Secondly, there was the perennial election question. Although it seemed as likely, as Horace Walpole said,[1] that they would see a King of the Jews, Newcastle still had the election of a King of the Romans much at heart, and believed that Keith did not appreciate its importance and therefore failed to press it upon the court of Vienna as strongly as he ought to have done.[2] Williams could be trusted to correct this deficiency and to do his utmost to win over the court of Vienna. He was instructed to play upon Austria's hostility to Prussia. If the election was carried through it would be a great blow to the King of Prussia and would make him less likely to disturb the general peace. Austria, once convinced of this, could hardly fail to change her conduct, and, as the Elector Palatine was particularly tractable at the moment, Newcastle still hoped to see his efforts crowned with success.

Thirdly, the negotiations between the Maritime Powers and Austria for the re-establishment of the barrier in the Austrian Netherlands and the making of a new treaty of commerce were not far from a complete deadlock.[3] Newcastle dreaded the effect which the loss of the privileges hitherto enjoyed by English merchants in the Austrian Netherlands under the exisiting treaties, which were unduly favourable to them, would have upon the approaching Parliamentary elections.[4] On this point also Williams was instructed to induce Austria to accept a compromise by exciting her hostility to Prussia.

"The King of Prussia," Newcastle wrote,

> again flatters himself those disputes must produce a coolness [between the Maritime Powers and Austria]; and on this also his

[1] *Letters*, iii, 148.
[2] Newcastle to Keith (very private), 29 December, 1752, in Add. MSS. 32841, f. 40b.
[3] Newcastle to Yorke, 9 March; Newcastle to Keith, 9 March, in Add. MSS. 32844, ff. 201 and 211 respectively.
[4] W. Bentinck to Prince Louis of Brunswick, 24 May, 1753, in *Archives*, ii, 283.

> Prussian Majesty founds his security, and from this . . . France will undoubtedly in time and perhaps soon regain their (*sic*) former influence and authority over the Republic of Holland first, and by that means over all Europe afterwards.

Williams was entrusted also with numerous commissions of less importance. He was to try to restore Newcastle to the Empress's good opinion; to appeal to the Emperor to use his influence to secure the adoption of Newcastle's policy at Vienna; and to draw up a report both on "persons and things" at Vienna, and particularly on the character and inclinations of Kaunitz, who had already received orders to return from the French Embassy to Vienna and take up the duties of Chancellor.[1] Finally, to avoid any appearance of direct communication between the British Government and the Czartoryski party in Poland, the King's reply to Flemming's letter was to be handed by Williams to Flemming's brother, then Saxon minister at Vienna.[2]

"His Majesty," Newcastle explained to Williams,

> directed that [the reply] should be general; as it would otherwise have been difficult on the one hand to avoid giving more encouragement than the King may think advisable or practicable, and as on the other there must be great inconvenience in seeming to dissuade and discountenance a spirit among the nobility of Poland to take such steps as may best secure the liberties of their own country and prevent them from flinging themselves into the hands of France and Prussia.

Williams arrived at Vienna in the middle of March, but found it impossible to execute his instructions until Kaunitz returned to Vienna, as none of the older ministers were willing to take the responsibility of discussing the future policy of Austria until the new Chancellor had given them their cue. The first point of his instructions was indeed obsolete, since both the Empress and the Emperor had already given Keith the strongest assurances that they would fulfil their engagements with George II as king

[1] Williams before going to Vienna suspected his French tendencies (Williams to Newcastle (private), 7 March, in Add. MSS. 32843, f. 187).

[2] Newcastle to Williams, 20 February (secret). Williams was well content with the reply, which was "sufficient to encourage the well-affected Polanders whilst at the same time it leaves His Majesty entirely free from any engagement with them" (Williams to Newcastle, 7 March).

and elector in the event of war with Prussia.[1] But the question of the best method of restraining Prussia was still under discussion between the two courts.[2] Vienna proposed that Britain should accede to the fourth secret article of the treaty of 1746 and should also accept the accession of Saxony on the conditions proposed by Brühl, which included a British guarantee of Saxony, and perhaps even of Poland, if attacked by Prussia.[3] Newcastle stigmatised these proposals as "nonsense."

The urgency of the Prussian question was increased by news[4] that Frederick intended, as soon as he could secure the support of France and induce the Turks to attack Russia or Austria, without waiting for the death of Augustus III, to attack Poland and annex Polish Prussia.[5] Williams and Keith were therefore instructed to find out what the courts of Vienna and Petersburg and their allies in Poland proposed to do in regard to the Polish succession; to demonstrate to the Austrian ministers the impracticability and insufficiency of their proposals for restraining Prussia; and to fling out the suggestion (but without committing their court) that a general defensive alliance should be formed

> wherein no particular acquisitions or advantages were to be stipulated for any one of the contracting parties, though the alliance should have in view the preventing the troubles to be apprehended upon the vacancy of the crown of Poland and any attack to be made by the Turks.

In effect, Newcastle offered the two imperial courts British assistance to defend their interests in Eastern Europe in exchange for their support of British interests in Western Europe, and, in particular, satisfactory Austrian guarantees to defend Hanover against Prussia and the Low Countries against France.

The first result of Williams's mission was to increase the

[1] Newcastle to Keith, 13 February, 9 March, 1753, in Add. MSS. 35475, ff. 14 and 55; Keith to Newcastle, 21 February, 9 March, in S.P.F., Germany; Satow, 135.

[2] Newcastle to Keith, 9 March, in Add. MSS. 32843, f. 211; Newcastle to Yorke (private), 6 April, in Add. MSS. 32844, f. 54; Newcastle to Williams, 30 March.

[3] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 376, 394.

[4] Newcastle to Keith (private and secret), 30 March, in Add. MSS. 35475, f. 164; Newcastle to Williams and Keith, 20 April; Newcastle to Yorke (private), 6 April, in Add. MSS. 32844, f. 54.

[5] Later it was reported that Sweden was being engaged in the coalition. (Newcastle to Keith, 22 June, in Add. MSS. 35476, f. 82.)

tension between the rival leagues. Frederick II, preternaturally suspicious where his old antagonist was concerned, wondered what new mystery of iniquity was hidden beneath the surface,[1] and jumped correctly to the conclusion that Williams's mission was intended to secure Austrian support if an Anglo-Prussian war broke out.[2] Then he received news of Austrian and Saxon movements of troops [3] which led him for a brief space to believe that Williams was probably arranging at Vienna an Austro-British-Hanoverian-Saxon attack upon Prussia.[4] With characteristic impulsiveness he began military counter-preparations and appealed to France for support.[5] Subsequent enquiries soon proved that the projected attack was a figment of his own imagination.[6] This incident, although of no consequence in itself, is significant of the growing tension between the rival leagues, due to mutual suspicion and fear. Frederick's armaments and his rash actions whenever he scented danger increased the tension, and created an atmosphere in which diplomacy regarded the outbreak of a great European war as sooner or later inevitable.

Meantime Williams remained at Vienna,[7] awaiting the arrival of Kaunitz. He lived in close harmony with Keith and Flemming, cultivated the Anglophil Austrian ministers, and officiously advised the chief of them, Count Colloredo, to unite himself closely with Kaunitz in order to overthrow Bartenstein,[8] to whom he, like his predecessors at Vienna, attributed the unconciliatory attitude of the Austrian court towards Britain. He composed a couple of Latin verses in praise of the Empress, which attained European celebrity, although the greater part of them was not original.[9] But Maria Theresa was not the woman

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 377, 391, 402–3.
[2] *Ibid.*, 382, 391, 396.
[3] *Ibid.*, 402–5.
[4] *Ibid.*, 405, 407–8. His final version (ix, 457–8) was that Austria had demanded subsidies, and the negotiation had therefore fallen through.
[5] *Ibid.*, 409. Frederick, when he discovered his error, bitterly regretted this appeal to France, since it would confirm the suspicions of the French Government that he was trying to involve them in war (*ibid.*, ix, 424–5).
[6] *Ibid.*, 417, 419.
[7] Arneth's account of his mission, in iv, 316–7.
[8] Williams to Newcastle, 11 April.
[9] "O regina orbis prima et pulcherrima, ridens
Es Venus, incedens Juno, Minerva loquens."
(Walpole, *Letters*, iii, 155–6.)

to be influenced by flattery in any language, and Williams's interviews with her were entirely unsatisfactory.

"It was not difficult," he reported,[1]

> to perceive in the conversations which I had the honour of having with her Imperial Majesty, that her intentions are to live in the strictest union with the King. But I had the misfortune to differ from her Imperial Majesty about the means of cementing that union. Her jealousy of being governed broke out very often and particularly in the whole story of the Maritime Powers having signed the preliminaries at Aix without her. Upon this I took the liberty to talk with great freedom to her Imperial Majesty; I recapitulated in the strongest manner the many obligations she had to the King. . . . I also told her Imperial Majesty that besides all the King had already done for her service, he had been at no time more inclined to continue and improve the strictest union with her Majesty than at present; that the King desired no superiority, but that he insisted upon equality and reciprocity; and that I was sorry to tell her Imperial Majesty that all unprejudiced persons were convinced that it was owing to some jealousy of this sort, and the want of a due confidence in the best and most powerful friend of the House of Austria, that the great affair of the election of a King of the Romans had not been long ago completed, and that it was a melancholy consideration for those who were sincerely attached to the House of Austria to reflect that while the King was taking indefatigable pains and expending great sums for attaining one of the greatest benefits that could accrue to her Imperial family and to the peace of Europe, the court of Vienna had rather hindered than forwarded the great work. The Empress-Queen was warmed by what I said, and seemed to take it very ill; but I could not depart from what I was convinced was true. Your Grace had ordered me to talk with freedom and I did so.
>
> Our conversation was still more animated upon the affair of the barrier. . . . I was resolved to do my utmost to persuade her

[1] Coxe in *Pelham Administration*, ii, 469–82, prints this celebrated despatch almost in full. It was obviously designed to please the King and Newcastle (Yorke to Hardwicke, 7 August, in Add. MSS. 35356, f. 171). Yorke was delighted to hear from his father (Add. MSS. 35356, f. 175) that the despatch was "not to be read by the principal person for whom [Williams] wrote and with a view to pay his court to whom many of the pictures have been particularly heightened." Not only Coxe in his *House of Austria*, chapter cix, but also Arneth quote repeatedly from this despatch, and thus afford convincing proof of the substantial accuracy of Williams's vivid characterisation of the Austrian sovereigns and ministers.

Imperial Majesty . . . of the injustice with which (the Maritime Powers) had been treated. This I did with a decent freedom. But I am sorry to say that I found her Imperial Majesty so prejudiced in this affair that reason had very little share in all she said. The notion of being the independent sovereign of the Low Countries is so fixed in her that it will be difficult to eradicate it. I took the liberty to tell her Majesty in so many words that she was far from being the independent sovereign of the Low Countries, that she was limited by her treaties with the Maritime Powers, which I hoped for the future at least would be no more violated. This her Imperial Majesty seemed also to take very ill; and insisted loudly, so loudly that the people in the next room heard her, that she was the sovereign of the Low Countries, and that it was her duty to protect her subjects, who had been too long oppressed by the barrier treaty and deprived of the natural privileges which all other nations enjoy. To this I replied that the treaty of the barrier was still in force, though it had certainly been violated by her Imperial Majesty. . . . I wish I could tell your Grace anything I said upon this subject had made the least impression upon the Empress-Queen. . . .

I believe Your Grace will now be of opinion that I might have made my court at Vienna in a better manner; but my chief object there was a due execution of Your Grace's orders; and, if I have His Majesty's approbation I am very indifferent about everything else.

Williams's interviews with Kaunitz were still less satisfactory [1] when it came to a discussion of concrete questions, although Kaunitz had no difficulty in persuading Williams that he was completely cured of his French inclinations. Their discussions turned mainly on the question of the barrier.

"As I look upon that treaty [of the barrier]," Williams reports,

as the cement which unites the Maritime Powers to the House of Austria and which makes the basis of the defence of the liberties of Europe I have employed all the time my health would permit

[1] "Kaunitz affected very often to tell me that he was better informed of the subjects upon which we talked than I was. To which I usually answered that weak as my arguments might be they were not to be refuted by bare assertions, and that, though I confessed his superiority of talents and knowledge, yet I could not help thinking that what I said generally deserved an answer." (Williams to Newcastle, 15 July, 1753, S.P.F., Poland, part not printed by Coxe.)

in debating that point with Count Kaunitz. . . . But it is impossible to come to any conclusion where people differ entirely in the first principles. Kaunitz talks as if he was persuaded that we had no longer any right to our ancient tariff; and I am firmly persuaded that the giving up that would be giving up a right which we acquired at a prodigious expense, which we have never since forfeited, and which we have now as good a right to as we had the day after the signing the Treaty. I [demonstrated] to Count Kaunitz the impossibility of our accepting the preliminaries which he delivered to Count Bentinck at the Hague. [Kaunitz then indicated his readiness to consider favourably any counter proposals made by the Maritime Powers.] After this he proceeded to explain the necessity of her Imperial Majesty keeping up a larger body of troops in Flanders than she was obliged to do by the barrier treaty till such time as the fortifications of the barrier towns should be repaired; that her Imperial Majesty had no fund for maintaining the additional number of troops and therefore would be obliged to apply to the States of Flanders and Brabant for an increase of revenue which there would be little hopes of obtaining unless her Imperial Majesty could show them that she was sure of procuring for them some new and solid advantages in their commerce; and that without something of that sort she doubted very much whether those states would even continue the revenues which her Imperial Majesty enjoyed at present; and without which the Empress-Queen would be obliged to reduce her army which at present was so absolutely necessary for the defence of Flanders. I objected to all this that it was not the addition of 6,000 or 8,000 Austrians that was to make the defence of the Low Countries, but a solid and indissoluble union between the Maritime Powers and the House of Austria, and whoever was the cause of dissolving that union would be the certain cause of the Austrian Netherlands being soon in the hands of France.[1]

Kaunitz ultimately handed to Williams the draft of two articles [2] to be inserted in the new barrier treaty, which was less unacceptable to Britain than anything Austria had hitherto offered, and these articles formed the basis of subsequent barrier negotiations.[3] The differences between Austria and Britain were, however, fundamental and proved insuperable.

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 9 June.
[2] Copy in Add. MSS. 32845, f. 45, printed in *O.S.*, ii, 120–2.
[3] Newcastle to Keith, 14 August, in Add. MSS. 35476, f. 202b : " Narrative of the negotiations relative to the Barrier," in S.P.F., Treaty Papers, 116.

Austria regarded herself as the independent sovereign of the Austrian Netherlands, while Newcastle insisted on regarding "the Low Countries as a kind of common country in which we, the Dutch, and the Empress-Queen are all interested." [1]

In regard to the third point of Williams's original instructions —the election of a King of the Romans—Kaunitz appeared to be more accommodating, although he had been from the beginning the most strenuous opponent of the scheme at Vienna.[2] If Austria could be induced to buy off the Elector Palatine Newcastle still believed that France would acquiesce in the election and was prepared to proceed with it. Kaunitz gave Williams some hopes that he would make an answer to the last demands of the Elector Palatine which would satisfy Britain, but these hopes were not realised.[3] Similarly in regard to the affairs of Poland, Williams could only give Newcastle the platitudinous assurance that the court of Vienna was "alarmed at the thoughts of seeing a French prince on the throne of Poland and of His Prussian Majesty aggrandising himself by the acquisition of Polish Prussia." [4] Finally, Kaunitz promised to draw up a draft treaty of defensive alliance to be joined by all the well-intentioned Powers and to submit it to the British Government, but this promise also remained unfulfilled.

Thus Williams was no more successful than Hyndford in strengthening the Anglo-Austrian alliance. This task was indeed beyond the power of a single diplomatist, and could only have been accomplished by a radical change of men, of spirit, and of measures on both sides. Newcastle's meddlesome and opinionated policy, pressed upon Austria in imperious and argumentative language, offended Bartenstein,[5] who was as irritating

[1] On the barrier and commercial negotiations between the Maritime Powers and Austria see *O.S.*, ii, 94–114; Gachard, *Histoire de la Belgique au commencement du XVIII^e siècle*, 506, *et seq.*

[2] *O.S.*, ii, 27, etc.

[3] Newcastle was still pressing the election in 1754. Newcastle to Keith (very private), 1 February, 1754, in Add. MSS. 32848, f. 209: "Never let the ministers rest till [the election] is done. I dare not write this by order. But I will never give it up."

[4] Williams to Newcastle, 9 June. *Cf.* Keith to Newcastle, 14 November, in Add. MSS. 32847, f. 52. As late as 5 July, 1754, Holderness complained to Keith (Add. MSS. 35478, f. 26) that no particular answer had been returned to Newcastle's despatch of 20 April, 1753, to Williams and Keith.

[5] See, on his career, Arneth's article in *Archiv für Oesterr. Gesch.*, Bd. 46.

a controversialist as Newcastle, and was in addition the very incarnation of that stiff-necked formalism which has in all epochs distinguished the court of Vienna. The relations between the two ostensibly allied courts "degenerated into a paper war." [1] And when Kaunitz got rid of Bartenstein there was—despite Williams's prophecies—no appreciable improvement in Anglo-Austrian relations. Kaunitz may have been momentarily sincere in his assurances and in his promises, because he at times feared that the reconciliation of Austria and France would be a task beyond the resources of the ablest diplomacy. More probably he was merely paying lip homage to Austria's old love until he was securely established in the affections of the new.[2] Williams accepted the counterfeit for the genuine coin,[3] and his reports of Austria's readiness to defend Britain or Hanover against attack and of the new Chancellor's favourable inclinations towards the "old system," confirmed as they were in both respects by Keith's despatches,[4] helped to prolong Newcastle's residence in a fool's paradise, from which he was rudely thrust in the summer of 1755, when Austria demanded impossible terms for assisting Britain to defend Hanover and the Netherlands against France. In fact, Kaunitz's abandonment of hostility to France, whether he succeeded in detaching France from Prussia or not, converted Austria's alliance with Britain from the essential foundation of Austrian foreign policy into a dangerous burden, since at any moment Franco-British hostility might involve Austria in war with France. The alliance had virtually lost its *raison d'être*, and there was naturally no dis-

[1] Coxe, *House of Austria*, iii, 350. [2] *Ibid.*, 354.

[3] Frederick II at this time also believed that Kaunitz was Anglophil. (*Pol. Corr.*, ix, 438.) Klingräffen wisely refrained from committing himself, merely remarking that "toutes ses paroles sont douces et emmiellées envers tout le monde." (*Pol. Corr.*, ix, 439 ; *cf.* Arneth, iv, 352.)

[4] Keith swallowed Kaunitz's platitudes with even greater avidity than Williams : "Count Kaunitz upon all occasions . . . has declared in the most explicit terms that he considers the union of the House of Austria with the maritime powers . . . as the only solid basis upon which our whole system can be built . . . and one day having in talking made use of the word *Nous* he stopped and said that whenever he made use of that term he always joined the King with their Imperial Majesties. . . . Kaunitz has the worst opinion in the world of the French sincerity and is at the same time fully persuaded of their bad disposition towards the House of Austria and her allies, and this makes him suspect everything that comes from that quarter." (Keith to Newcastle (very private), 25 May, in Add. MSS. 32844, f. 339.)

position on the Austrian side to make sacrifices for the "common cause," since in Kaunitz's eyes that cause no longer existed. The only method of restoring to the British alliance the value it had lost would have been for Britain to commit herself to Austro-Russian antagonism to Prussia, and in particular to accede to the fourth secret article of the treaty of 1746. This was repeatedly demanded both by Bartenstein [1] and by Kaunitz. Williams's arguments therefore made as little impression on Kaunitz as Hyndford's eloquence had made on Bartenstein.

Such being the attitude of the court of Vienna, no real concessions could be expected on the definite points of business on which Williams was instructed to negotiate at Vienna. His insistence on these points merely provoked, as we have seen, heated controversies with the Empress-Queen and her Chancellor. Doubtless his ill-timed insistence upon the British point of view alienated them still further from Britain, and made them more eager than ever to escape from their galling dependence upon an ally who demanded so much and would give so little in exchange. Henceforth Keith remained undisturbed at Vienna, and, by toning down Newcastle's despatches and submitting as gracefully as possible to Austrian insolence, contrived to maintain the semblance of an alliance which was soon, at the first shock of reality, dissolved into its constituent elements.

Williams's stay at Vienna was much prolonged by illness,[2] and it was not until 15 June that he arrived at Dresden and found awaiting him there a formal letter from Newcastle giving him leave to return to England. After a month's residence at Dresden, ostensibly to re-establish his health, he set out for England, taking with him the future King of Poland, Stanislas Poniatowski, who had assiduously attended him during his illness both at Vienna and Dresden.[3] At Hanover they remained three days, and Poniatowski records that

> tout Anglais qu'il étoit Williams ne négligeoit pas ce qu'ils appellent: les *backstairs*. Il renouvela soigneusement connaissance

[1] *O.S.*, ii, 61 ff.

[2] Keith to Newcastle (very private), 25 May, in Add. MSS. 32844, f. 339; Williams to Newcastle, 9 June; Williams to Newcastle (private), 11 June, in Add. MSS. 32845, f. 69.

[3] Poniatowski, 70–6.

avec toutes les personnes des deux sexes et de tout âge qui avaient quelque connexion avec my L[ady] Y[armouth]." [1]

At The Hague Williams remained for a week. Yorke believed that his main object was to try and pick up gossip to Yorke's disadvantage, which he could use to avenge Fox's defeat by Hardwicke in their controversy over the Marriage Act and possibly to secure the post of envoy at The Hague for himself.[2] Yorke took elaborate precautions against these designs, and was delighted to find that Williams was "suspect and disliked by the Princess Royal and all our friends here." [3] The Pensionary was particularly hostile to Williams, who apparently had not paid him the customary visit of ceremony when passing through The Hague in 1749. The Bentincks also disliked him and blamed particularly his outspoken conduct at Vienna, since they believed that Newcastle's treatment of Austria and impolitic insistence upon Britain's rights might easily destroy the old system.[4]

Williams was either unaware or else contemptuous of the cabal against him, and openly discussed his projects, "of which," Yorke records, "he is brimming full," [5] with all and sundry at The Hague.[6] These projects, and particularly his 'character' of the court of Vienna, made him less popular than ever at The Hague, because the latter "is very free and all our friends here are not in the same way of thinking about the court of Vienna as he is and think too that as they have lived there longer they know

[1] Poniatowski, 75.

[2] Yorke to Hardwicke, 13 July and 24 July, in Add. MSS. 35356, ff. 159, 167.

[3] Yorke to Hardwicke, 17 July, in Add. MSS. 35356, f. 165. *Cf.* W. Bentinck to Newcastle, 20 July, in Add. MSS. 32845, f. 377 : " Williams is not at all in fashion amongst us . . . I don't think it will be at all necessary to enter with him into any detail about the affair of the Barrier since it is impossible for him with the little knowledge he has of our constitution to judge of what we are doing or of making any just report of it." Williams had asked Newcastle to instruct him to discuss the affair with Bentinck. (Williams to Newcastle (private), 30 June, in Add. MSS. 32845, f. 209.)

[4] W. Bentinck to Louis of Brunswick, 24 May, 1753, in *Archives*, ii, 279 ff. ; notes of W. Bentinck, *ibid.*, 286–7.

[5] Yorke to Hardwicke, 31 July, in Add. MSS. 35356, f. 169.

[6] Williams's real business at The Hague and at Amsterdam (Yorke to Newcastle (private), 31 July, in Add. MSS. 32845, f. 464) was to treat with the Dutch creditors of the Saxon *Steuer*. There were already three Saxon ministers at The Hague negotiating on this point ; Williams then appeared with instructions from Augustus III to offer ½ per cent. more than the Saxon ministers were authorised to offer as interest on the debt !

it better." [1] Yorke shared his friends' belief that had not Bartenstein been displaced by Kaunitz he "would have made a bad use of the freedom with which Sir Charles spoke and I believe by authority" [1]—an implied and in the main just criticism of Newcastle's attitude towards Austria. By the middle of August Williams was back in London,[2] after an absence of more than three years, and at once flung himself into the Fox-Hardwicke vendetta,[3] which had developed from Fox's violent attack on Hardwicke's Marriage Act.

[1] Yorke to Hardwicke, 7 August, in Add. MSS. 35356, f. 171.

[2] Holderness to Newcastle, in Add. MSS. 32732, f. 582. Frederick II was seriously afraid that Williams might stimulate the bellicose element in the British cabinet so as to provoke war with Prussia. But Michell, the Prussian secretary at London, reported that he played an insignificant *rôle* in his own country, although he was so prominent on the Continent. (*Pol. Corr.*, x, 102.)

[3] Yorke to Hardwicke, 28 August, f. 175; 4 September, f. 177, both in Add. MSS. 35356.

CHAPTER IX

POLAND AND SAXONY (1753–6)

Williams's plan for securing the election of the Electoral Prince of Saxony to the Polish throne—Its futility—Reorganisation of the Potocki party—Growing alienation of Brühl from the Czartoryski—Broglie seeks to reconcile Brühl and the Potocki—Williams postpones his return to Warsaw—The ordination of the Ostrog—Danger of civil war in Poland—Policy of France and Frederick—Alarm of Britain at the growth of French influence in Eastern Europe—Importance of Saxony-Poland in view of the danger of a general European war—Williams sets out for Warsaw with very wide instructions on the affairs of Eastern Europe—His secret negotiation with Russia—His attempts to reconcile Brühl and the Czartoryski fail—The Diet of 1754—Cham of Tartary intervenes in the domestic affairs of Poland—Sequestration of the Ostrog revenues—Folly of Brühl's conduct—His motives—Brühl and the Czartoryski appeal to Russia—Schemes of Broglie—Divergence of Saxon and Polish policy—Brühl seeks renewal of his subsidy treaty with Britain—Britain fails by the threat of non-renewal of subsidies to change Brühl's Polish policy—Austria and Russia also protest against Brühl's treatment of the Czartoryski—Brühl again begs the British Government to renew the treaty of subsidy—His negotiations with France—He refuses to enter completely into the French system—His distrust of the Potocki—Frederick II's invasion of Saxony reconciles the foreign policies of the King of Poland and the Elector of Saxony.

BEFORE leaving Dresden in 1753 Williams had drawn up a Memorial giving full details of his project for securing the succession to the Polish throne in the lifetime of Augustus III. The revised scheme [1] was based, Williams said, upon his conversations at Vienna with the Austrian ministers, who simulated almost total ignorance of the affairs of Poland, and on a formal conference at Dresden [2] between Brühl, his son-in-law, Mniszek, Flemming, Williams, Gross, and Saul. In reality the essential features of the scheme had been agreed upon by Williams and the Czartoryski leaders, especially Count Flemming,[3] Great Treasurer of Lithuania and brother of the better known Saxon diplomatist. In this scheme Williams shows that the lessons to be learned from the course of the King of the Romans negotia-

[1] In S.P.F., Poland, dated 15 July, 1753.
[2] Protocol of the Conference in S.P.F., Poland.
[3] Williams to Keith, 29 November, 1752, in Add. MSS. 35474, f. 128.

tion had not entirely escaped him. He recognised that the first essential was an agreed plan approved by the Saxon court and the Allies. Once this alliance was formed and the plan of campaign adopted, Williams believed it would be comparatively easy to carry the election. "First the influence and real power the Court of Warsaw has in that country is always considerable, and if it was well managed it would be irresistible." Faction spirit was less heated than it would be during an interregnum, and the long peace Poland had enjoyed made the wealthiest and therefore most influential Poles desire its continuance. They would readily support the proposed election, but no time should be lost, as the death of the King of Poland would throw Poland into confusion and provoke a general European war. External circumstances also demanded immediate action. "There was never a time (and futurity gives no prospect of one) when the three great and well-intentioned Powers of Europe were better united than at present," [1] while France was pacific both by inclination and financial necessity, and Prussia dared not venture to begin a war unless assured of French support. To delay taking action until the King of Poland's death would be fatal in view of France's notorious schemes to set Conti on the Polish throne. Prussian assistance would then be easily purchased by the cession of Polish Prussia, and the result would be to shut the door to Russian influence in Europe.

Williams brushed aside the formidable constitutional difficulties with the bare assertion that there were three precedents for the election of a successor in the lifetime of a reigning king. The one difficulty, he admitted, was that the proposal of the election must not be made by the Crown, but by a nuncio, or else by the joint action of the three allied ministers at Warsaw.

The first step was obviously to secure as large a majority as possible in the Diet by breaking up the dietines at which Opposition candidates were likely to be returned. Then the ministers must sound the nuncios and see how many could be brought into the views of the court either by bribery or intimidation. Immediately after the election of a Marshal entirely devoted to

[1] The blindness of contemporaries to the weakness of the Anglo-Imperial alliance is not surprising, but Williams has less excuse since the lessons which his Vienna mission ought to have driven home to his mind had evidently escaped him entirely.

the court, the Diet must be turned into a confederation which would enable it to act by majority vote. The opponents of the court would immediately retire and appeal for foreign assistance to form a rival confederation. But before the opposition could organise resistance the election of a successor would be proposed and carried in the Diet of Confederation and sanctioned by the King.

> A Diet of Confederation made and conducted in the manner I propose would be begun and ended in less than twenty-four hours, and the nearest foreign power would hear of the birth and execution of this project by the same post and it is upon the quickness with which it may be executed that I found the chief merit of my plan. . . . Your Grace will notice in all I propose that nobody is to interfere in fixing the succession of the crown of Poland but the Poles themselves, and whoever invades their country for acts done in their assemblies in exact conformity with the laws and rules of their constitution must be looked upon as the beginner of an offensive war. . . . Russia would be obliged to appear with all her force, and it is well known His present Polish Majesty is as much afraid of Russia as ever his father was.

Therefore it was extremely unlikely that a general war would result, and, in any case, Britain, having no defensive engagements with Poland, need not intervene. Russia had already begun to build up a strong party in Poland, and if Britain could induce her to adopt Williams's programme its success would be certain, because of Russia's almost boundless influence over the Saxon court and the best-intentioned Poles. As a final argument to induce his Government to accept his scheme, Williams appealed to George II's notorious hatred of Frederick II. The execution of the plan "would be the severest blow to His Prussian Majesty that he has yet felt, as it will entirely disappoint his unjust views upon Polish Prussia which has so long been the view of the House of Brandenburg." Thus Britain would risk practically nothing by taking up the scheme, and its almost certain success would give her great gains—the preservation of the general peace in Europe, the strengthening of Britain's Continental allies, and the consequent weakening of France and humiliation of Prussia.

The execution of this grandiose plan depended upon its adop-

tion by the imperial courts, and they were hardly likely to accept a plan in which they were to do all the work, while Britain shared the advantages of the successful execution of the scheme without sharing the risks of failure.

Russia's attitude was quite clear.[1] When the time came she would certainly support the Saxon candidate in preference to any other—even to a native *piast*, since the *piast* would probably accept, after election, the bribes of France and intrigue with the Ottoman Porte, whereas Saxon enmity to Prussia would keep the Saxon King at a distance from France, and Saxony had no connection with the Porte. But Russia saw no occasion for immediate action, since the King of Poland's health was good and that of his eldest son bad, and in any case she had no intention of undertaking unaided by her allies the whole burden of carrying through the election. Meantime Russia would give pensions to the leading members of her party, but Saxony must seek the support of her other allies, and especially of Austria, before the Russian Government could commit itself to securing the immediate election of the Electoral Prince of Saxony. Austria's attitude was much more reserved. She and her allies, Kaunitz declared, were so much occupied with other business—for example, the Russian subsidy negotiation and the election of the King of the Romans—that it would be wise to wait and see the result of these negotiations before starting a fresh one of such consequence.[2]

Quite apart from the natural reluctance of Britain's allies to accept it, Williams's plan presupposed the undisputed ascendancy of the Czartoryski over their rivals and their close co-operation with Brühl. Both of these conditions were rapidly vanishing. The loss of the Great General after the Diet of 1752 was a serious blow to the Czartoryski, and was speedily followed by other defections. "The Party" was now attacked from two sides. On the one hand, the Potocki party, temporarily disorganised by the death of its leaders, began to revive under the leadership of the Palatin of Belz—an able and unscrupulous politician—who soon acquired an ascendancy over the feeble Great General. Broglie remained in Poland for some months

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 236–8 (based on Russian and Saxon despatches).
[2] *Ibid.*, x, 283.

after the Diet of 1752, working in close co-operation with the Potocki leader, promising generous bribes to all proselytes, and invoking the aid of the wives of likely converts. He was ably seconded,[1] and in large part directed, by Maltzahn, the Prussian minister, while Frederick II, although he pointed out that the Poles were flighty and would always pass from one paymaster to a better, and that there would always be two parties in Poland,[2] was delighted to have an energetic French minister in Poland and readily contributed to a joint Franco-Prussian fund for bribes.[3] On the other hand, Brühl and his son-in-law, Mniszek, encouraged by the favourable Russian reply to Brühl's overtures regarding the succession, redoubled their attempts to build up a court party independent of the Czartoryski, and already a link had been forged between the Potocki-Broglie faction and the Brühl-Mniszek clique, because Brühl's daughter and Mniszek's wife was one of Broglie's converts. She drove on her weak-willed and ambitious husband to widen the breach between her father and the Czartoryski.

While Williams had been wrangling at Vienna with the Empress-Queen and her Chancellor and electioneering in England,[4] the trend of events in Poland had escaped his notice, and his election project was completely out of date. His rival Broglie had remained, after his return to Dresden, in close touch with Polish affairs through a succession of subordinate agents in Poland.[5] His immediate aim—less ambitious but much more practicable than that of Williams—was to effect a coalition between the party Mniszek and Brühl had been trying to form and the revived Potocki party.

The first warning which the British Government received of the changed situation in Poland came from Calkoen, the Dutch envoy at Dresden,[6] who informed them of the formation, with

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 57, etc. [2] *Ibid.*, 278.

[3] Broglie appends a list of bribes to his despatch of 21 December, 1752 (A.E. Pologne, 239). Cf. *Pol. Corr.*, x, 57, 109.

[4] Williams to Newcastle, 6, 26 November, in Add. MSS. 32733, ff. 200, 325.

[5] Thomelin, La Fayardie, Jakubowski, Linau, and Gerault (Farges, ii, 135–53).

[6] Despatches of 5, 26 October, 9, 19 November, in Add. MSS. 32846, f. 395; 32847, ff. 11, 13, 142.

the support, or at least connivance, of Brühl, of a court party distinct from the Czartoryski, and urged that Williams should return at once to Dresden,[1] not merely on account of Polish affairs, but because the settlement of the *Steuer* controversy on terms extremely favourable to Saxony [2] led him to suspect some secret understanding between Saxony and Prussia. Calkoen's despatches alarmed Newcastle, and he summoned Williams to London, with the intention of sending him back immediately to Dresden.[3] Williams was reluctant to obey, put off his journey on the ground of his daughter's illness, and later of "a prodigious fall of snow," [4] and did not reach London till about 19 December. By this time the report of a secret understanding between Saxony and Prussia had been proved to have no foundation; and, although Colloredo, the Austrian minister at London, handed in a Note [5] giving details of the reduction of the Czartoryski faction and of the intrigues in favour of Conti's election, Williams was allowed to remain in England. This delay was most unfortunate, since the situation of the Czartoryski party rapidly deteriorated. A personal quarrel between Gross and the Grand Carver of the Crown,[6] one of the Potocki leaders, intensified party strife. Rumours that the Russian troops in Livonia were to be used in Poland [7] animated the Polish 'patriots,' while Brühl's attempts to build up an independent court party further alarmed them [8] and increased the prevailing confusion in Poland.

Early in 1754 a dispute over the ordination of the Ostrog [9] brought the party strife to a head and made an open breach between Brühl and the Czartoryski. Prince Janus Ostrogski had in 1609, subject to the maintenance of 600 knights for the defence of the Republic, entailed his estates upon the male issue

[1] "Il est," Calkoen writes, "maître du secret de cette cour et peut-être l'unique pour qui le Comte de Brühl a quelque égard : outre que le Roi a beaucoup de considération pour lui."

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 101–3, 109–10, 120–2, etc. ; *Geheimnisse*, i, 224.

[3] Newcastle to Keith, in Add. MSS. 35476, f. 275 ; 35477, ff. 11, 34.

[4] Williams to Newcastle, 26 November, 11 December, in Add. MSS. 32733, ff. 325, 419 ; Newcastle was becoming impatient (Fox to Newcastle, 18 December, in Add. MSS. 32733, f. 470).

[5] Dated 16 January, in Foreign Ministers, 54.

[6] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 116. [7] *Ibid.*, 203. [8] *Ibid.*, 237–8.

[9] Despatches of Williams and Broglie ; Williams to Keith, 20 November, 1754, in Add. MSS. 35478, f. 145 ; Orlick to Havrincourt (intercepted), 13 May, 1754, in Add. MSS. 32849, f. 142 ; Roepell, 98–103.

of his two daughters, failing whom to the knights of St John. The Diet had sanctioned this arrangement in 1618. In 1673 the last male in the direct line died, and, in spite of the protest of the knights of St John, the estates passed to the Lubomirski family, the nearest heirs of the last male liferenter. On the extinction of the Lubomirski direct male line in 1720, a minor civil war ensued. The claims of the knights of St John were again set aside, but Augustus II coveted the estates for the Crown, and introduced a new complication by claiming to sequestrate them until the rightful heir had proved his claim before the law courts. Meantime one of the claimants, Prince Paul Sangusko, brother-in-law of the last Lubomirski, forcibly took possession of Dubno, the chief fortress of the estates, and successfully resisted the attacks of the royal army. Finally, by bribing Augustus II's generals, Sangusko concluded a treaty with them which left him in possession of the Ostrog ordination until the next Diet could decide the disputed succession. When the Diet met in 1722 it was broken by a friend of Sangusko, and Prince Paul had remained since then in undisturbed possession.

Great as were the revenues of the Ostrog ordination, Sangusko's expenses were even greater, and after thirty years' debauchery and profusion he found himself at the end of his resources. As he had no children, he hit upon the expedient of breaking up the Ostrog ordination and selling it in parcels to the various families who had claims upon it after his death, thus raising ready money to satisfy the most pressing of his creditors. The contract of sale was drawn up on 7 December, 1753, between Sangusko and various members of the leading Polish families, chiefly the Lubomirski, but also the Sapieha and Potocki. The Great Chancellor of Poland, Malachowski, and the Palatin of Russia both had shares. This transaction could not be long concealed. News of it spread like wildfire across Poland, and roused the excitable Poles to fever pitch.

The Ostrog affair was a heaven-sent boon to France, and especially to Prussia. Since France had refused to accept his plans, Frederick had been compelled to return to his old negative policy of preventing the success of the Diets. The Ostrog affair set the nobles by the ears, and made it certain that Brühl's plans for continuing the Polish crown in the Saxon House could

not be brought forward in the Diet of 1754 with the slightest chance of success. Moreover, it was certain that the Diet would be broken without foreign intervention,[1] and Frederick therefore could dispense with the bribes usually given to the Polish nobles.[2] Maltzahn's instructions [3] prove that Frederick's only real fear was that party spirit in Poland might provoke confederations, and therefore European war. Maltzahn therefore had to steer a middle course between encouraging the Franco-Prussian partisans and being so reserved as to discourage them—the latter policy might have allowed the Saxon court to carry through its projects by a sudden stroke.

By April the British Government was informed by Laurence,[4] their agent at Dresden, of the danger of civil war in Poland, but they apparently failed to realise the importance of the crisis, and especially the effect which the Ostrog affair would have on the already strained relations of Brühl with the Czartoryski. Their main concern was still the designs of France upon the Polish throne in the event of a vacancy, and intercepted correspondence gave ample proof that France was doing her utmost to strengthen her system of alliances in Eastern Europe.[5] France had renewed her alliance with Sweden and was arranging a treaty between Prussia and the Porte, while her ambassador at Dresden was openly at the head of a large and growing party in Poland. The supineness, or worse, of Britain's allies was in glaring contrast with the activity of France. In spite of all Keith's efforts, Austria refused to commit herself to any definite Polish policy,[6] while Russia, by making impossible demands, virtually suspended the subsidy negotiation with Britain. Guy Dickens was openly at loggerheads with the Great Chancellor, who was the sole support of British interests at the Russian court,[7] and there were even rumours of a reconciliation between Russia and

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 286. [2] *Ibid.*, 310, 421, 436. [3] *Ibid.*, 395–9.

[4] Laurence to Newcastle, 24 March.

[5] See especially Holderness to Keene, 25 January, in Add. MSS. 32848, f. 186 ; Newcastle to Keith, 1 March, in Add. MSS. 35477, f. 163 ; Scheffer to Conti (intercepted), 28 January, in Add. MSS. 32848, f. 194 ; Orlick to Havrincourt (intercepted), 13 May, in Add. MSS. 32849, f. 142.

[6] Holderness to Keith, 5 July, in Add. MSS. 35478, f. 26. Among the memoranda for the King, dated 6 August, 1754, is the point : " the backwardness of the court of Vienna about Poland," in Add. MSS. 32736, f. 159.

[7] Guy Dickens to Holderness, 12/23 July, in Add. MSS. 32849, f. 362.

France.[1] The divisions and lukewarmness of the Anglo-Imperial alliance were the more serious because of a dispute between Russia and Turkey over Russia's erection of a new fortress on the River Ingul, near the Black Sea and on the Turkish frontier, which seemed likely to cause a war between the Porte and Russia.[2]

Whether war broke out in the East over Polish affairs or owing to the building of Fort St Elizabeth on the Ingul river, or in the West between Britain and France owing to colonial disputes, the existing system of alliances would almost certainly make it a general European war. In this event Poland occupied a pivotal position, and the French Government shared in a less extreme form Broglie's design to form a great northern coalition, with Poland as its centre, which would effectively cut off Russia from Europe and prevent the intervention of Austria on any considerable scale in the western war. On the other hand, if Poland were to be attached to the Austro-Russian alliance it would open up a road for Russia into the heart of Germany, would complete the encirclement of France's only important ally, Prussia, and would prevent France's remaining allies, Sweden and Turkey, from making more than mere diversions against the imperial courts.

The French Government, while remaining entirely pacific in inclination, acted on the maxim *Si vis pacem para bellum*. The British Government was less far sighted in Polish affairs, and continued to devote its main attention to securing in advance the succession to the Polish throne [3] in order to prevent, as Newcastle and Williams fondly hoped, the outbreak of war. They continued to press the desirability of some such scheme upon the two imperial courts,[4] neither of which was prepared to tie its hands in favour of the Saxon House, which was daily proving itself a weak and half-hearted ally. The restiveness of the Porte was a grave menace to Austria, and Kaunitz wished to avoid taking any step which might alarm the Turks and fling

[1] Holderness to Guy Dickens, 29 March, in Add. MSS. 35477, f. 193.
[2] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 326, 414, etc.; xi, 9–11, 42.
[3] Newcastle to Yorke (private), 6 April, 1753, in Add. MSS. 32844, f. 54.
[4] Holderness to Keith, 5 July, 1754, in Add. MSS. 35478, f. 26. *Cf.* Holderness to Keith, in Add. MSS. 35478, f. 105; Holderness to Guy Dickens (*apart*), in Add. MSS. 35478, f. 34.

them into the arms of Prussia, since he was fully informed of Frederick's schemes to induce the Porte to attack Austria and Russia and divert their attention from Poland.[1]

The question of the Polish succession was doubtless the main point discussed by Newcastle and Williams on the eve of Williams's departure for Warsaw; but it was impossible to separate the Polish question from the general politics of Eastern Europe, and the instructions which Holderness drew up, on the lines agreed upon by Newcastle and Williams, made Williams a kind of minister for the general affairs of Eastern Europe.[2] These instructions were supplemented by "private and secret instructions" dated 20 June, 1754,[3] which authorised him to urge Brühl to favour the well-intentioned Poles, since this was the best way to defeat the schemes of Prussia, and to assure the Czartoryski party of the King's "affection for their Republic" and readiness to use his good offices in conjunction with his allies to support them in their rights. On the initiative of the King, Williams's commission was extended still further by verbal instructions in regard to the long-drawn-out negotiations for a treaty of subsidy with Russia.[4] The King was anxious that Williams should set out at once to execute these orders, but Williams secured a postponement of his journey in order to be present at the marriage of his daughter.[5]

Ultimately he set out early in August, probably with more or less definite assurances from Newcastle of the reversion of Guy Dickens's post at Petersburg.[6] When at last he reached Warsaw on 10 September his first business was to execute the King's verbal instructions. Gross readily agreed to write to the Great Chancellor and invite him to resume in secret at Warsaw the negotiation for a subsidy treaty, which had virtually broken down at Petersburg, and to promise him ample rewards from the

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 381–99.

[2] Holderness to Newcastle, 16 June, in Add. MSS. 32735, f. 474. *Cf.* Holderness to Williams, 8 October; Williams to Holderness, 6 November.

[3] F.O., 90, vol. xlvii.

[4] Holderness to Williams (secret), 20 September (confirming verbal instructions).

[5] Williams to Newcastle, 6 August, in Add. MSS. 32736, f. 162.

[6] Williams to Newcastle (private), 25 January, 1753, in Add. MSS. 32842, f. 262; Newcastle to Williams, 11 April, 1755, in Add. MSS. 32854, f. 97.

British Government if the negotiation came to a successful conclusion.[1] The negotiation, however, was shortly afterwards resumed at Petersburg, and the answer which Williams received to his overtures at the end of February 1755 was a profound disappointment, since it contained no new proposals and left the British Government to take the next step forward in the negotiation.[2]

Williams found when he arrived at Warsaw in September that the position had altered completely within the last few months. Brühl received him with a marked coldness; the King no longer discussed business with him, but talked of indifferent subjects.[3] Yet Brühl and Broglie were on worse terms than before,[4] and there was no question as yet of Saxony's reversion to the French alliance of 1746–50. In Poland the Czartoryski alliance with the court was at an end, and court favour had been almost wholly transferred to the Potocki party, in the hope of cementing the coalition between them and the small but powerful clique already detached from the two great parties by the intrigues and bribery of Mniszek and Brühl.[5]

Williams and Gross, who was acting on the express orders of his court,[6] concentrated their attention upon effecting a reconciliation between the court and the Czartoryski by securing both parties' acceptance of a compromise on the Ostrog question.[7] Brühl was still wavering between the novel and risky policy advocated by his son-in-law and a return, before it was too late, to his old system of alliance with the Czartoryski. He approached the Palatin of Russia and offered to restore the Czartoryski leaders to court favour if they could agree with him on a plan for regulating the Ostrog ordination.[8] This overture was probably

[1] Williams to Holderness, 6 November.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 26 February, 1755.
[3] Williams to Holderness, 14, 18, 21 September.
[4] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 441.
[5] "Without Mniszek's interest the French party would have found no favour at court; and without the junction of the French ambassador's friends Mniszek would have had but a very slender party in Poland." (Williams to Holderness, 29 January, 1755.)
[6] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 420.
[7] Williams to Holderness, 18 September.
[8] Williams to Holderness, 25 September. This step was possibly due to the intervention of the French Government. (Scheffer to Höpken, 13 September, 1754 (intercepted), in Add. MSS. 32850, f. 313.)

not sincere, but due merely to Brühl's habitual duplicity. The Great General decided after some hesitation not to support the compromise [1] on the Ostrog question proposed by the Czartoryski, and since his acceptance of it was essential Brühl threw over the settlement, which he had previously accepted,[2] and redoubled his efforts to build up a rival party to the Czartoryski.

The Diet met on 30 September and, as usual, contemptuously put aside the business suggested by the King for its deliberation. The Czartoryski protested against the continued occupation of Dubno by the royal troops, and refused to proceed to the election of a Marshal of the Diet until Dubno was evacuated. This move forced Brühl to magnify the constitutional powers of the Great General, who had ordered the occupation of Dubno on his own authority, and thus placed Brühl in a false position, since the office of Great General was one of the main obstacles to effective government of Poland by the Crown. But Brühl had now gone too far to draw back, and the tactics of the Czartoryski merely cemented the coalition of their enemies. Brühl was furious at their opposition, and told Broglie, towards the close of the Diet, that if the Czartoryski thought that by breaking the Diet they would prevent the decision of the Ostrog affair against them they had taken the very step which convinced the King of the need for giving the administration of the Ostrog to the Potocki leaders.[3] The first result of the Brühl-Potocki coalition was the election, with the avowed support of the court, and in the presence of large numbers of the royal troops,[4] of Count Potocki, Chief Butler of the Crown and a leading member of the French party, as Marshal of the Petrikau tribunal.

Mniszek began to act openly with the French and Prussian ministers,[5] and a few weeks later Brühl accepted a pension of 10,000 ducats from France.[6] The Princes Czartoryski now posed as the champions of the ancient liberties of Poland, and

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 430. [2] Williams to Holderness, 2, 5 October.
[3] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 454.
[4] This, the Czartoryski protested, was unconstitutional. (Williams to Holderness, 12 October, 14 November.) Brühl alleged that the large bodyguard which the Czartoryski took with them made the presence of the troops of the Crown necessary to preserve peace.
[5] Williams to Holderness, 16 October.
[6] Broglie, *Secret du Roi*, i, 92 ; *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 66–7.

attributed to their opponents the design to form a Diet of confederation, which their opponents had attributed to them in 1752. This project had actually been advocated by some of the Potocki leaders in 1753, and warmly approved by Broglie,[1] but had been frowned upon by the French Government, the policy of which was simply "to lie by and abstain from action, but without discouraging the well-intentioned" Poles.[2] The Czartoryski, therefore, refused to allow the election of a Marshal until the Ostrog ordination was settled by a compromise;[3] and, after three weeks of futile and increasingly vehement orations, the activity of the Diet was stopped in the customary way by the *liberum veto*[4] of an obscure member of the Czartoryski party, Stravinski,[5] the deputy for Upita, who alleged that the attempted intervention of the Diet in a question of private property (the Ostrog affair) was contrary to the constitution and endangered the liberties of the Republic. Driven into opposition, the Czartoryski had no difficulty in adopting the tactics, and even the very catchwords, of their opponents.

Similarly the new court party played to its sorry conclusion the solemn farce ordained by precedent. The Diet continued in session awaiting the return of the protesting nuncio; it sent deputations after him to entreat him to return and withdraw his protest; finally, on 31 October, the Marshal of the last Diet closed the proceedings with the customary valedictory address, in which he deplored the spirit of faction which rendered Diet after Diet fruitless, and prophesied, as his predecessors had done for the best part of a century, the speedy destruction of the Republic.

Perhaps there is no clearer sign of the decline of Poland in the first half of the eighteenth century than an incident which occurred during this Diet. The intervention of neighbouring great Powers in the internal affairs of Poland was notorious, and was soon imitated by the lesser neighbouring potentates. A

[1] Broglie, *Secret du Roi*, i, 87–8; Williams to Holderness, 2 December, 1754.
[2] Scheffer to Höpken (intercepted), in Add. MSS. 32851, f. 20.
[3] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 453.
[4] Mniszek raised, but did not insist upon, the constitutional point that no nuncio could break the Diet until after the election of a Marshal, since the nuncio's mandate had not yet been pronounced legal. (*Pol. Corr.*, x, 454.)
[5] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 453.

special envoy of the Cham of Tartary declared to the King and the Polish officers of State that his master had heard of a project for altering the Polish constitution and disturbing the peace of the Republic, and looked, therefore, upon the advocates of this design as enemies to their country.[1] This flagrant intervention of an insignificant neighbour in the internal affairs of Poland was received by both Polish factions as a mere matter of course.

Immediately after the dissolution of the Diet the King, on the petition of a majority of the senators, sequestrated the Ostrog estates, assigned a pension to Prince Sangusko, and appointed a large body of commissioners, drawn entirely from the Potocki party, to administer the estates,[2] out of the revenues of which their salaries were to be paid. As the commissioners were to be responsible to the Diet, notoriously impotent to exercise control over them, they became virtually life renters of the estate. The sequestration was as illegal as the contract of sale between Sangusko and the purchasers, since the Republic had no claim upon the estates except the service of 600 knights. By alliance with the Potocki Brühl had succeeded where Augustus II had failed in asserting the royal authority, but the spoils of victory had to be handed over to his allies, and the Crown gained no material advantage. The Czartoryski, who had broken up the Diet on the plea that its intervention in a question of private property was illegal, now declared that only the Diet could legally settle the Ostrog affair, but their protests were in vain, and their followers saw vanish their last hopes of making good their claims to the Ostrog ordination. "The Family," who for so long had dominated Poland, had been defeated and humiliated by a coalition of their enemies. Many of their adherents had been already won over by the court, others were only waiting a suitable opportunity to desert to the winning side. Brühl had successfully shaken off the galling yoke of an overpowerful family, although he was soon to find that he had only exchanged one servitude for another. Moreover, the solid kernel of the Czartoryski, strengthened rather

[1] Williams to Holderness, 21 September.

[2] *Cf.* on sequestration, *Pol. Corr.*, x, 469, 471. Maltzahn concludes his despatch of 7 November gleefully: "Le mécontentement du ministre de Russie et de celui d'Angleterre est extrême; le dernier ne sort pas de sa chambre."

than weakened by the desertion of their adventitious followers, remained unbroken in opposition. Its organisation and cohesion made it a more dangerous obstacle than the weak and divided Potocki party had been to the execution of Brühl's schemes in Poland. In Russia the new Opposition had a near and potent friend, whereas the Potocki had been compelled to look for support to a distant and officially lukewarm France.

Brühl's attempt, therefore, to assert the royal authority in Poland was at best a temporary and Pyrrhic victory. He had thrown to the winds the only chance of securing such a reform of the constitution as would have really strengthened the Crown. He had fatally alienated the Czartoryski and, to a less extent, Russia, whose support was essential for the maintenance of the Polish Crown in the House of Saxony. The Czartoryski, formerly content to place the question of the succession after that of constitutional reform, now seriously turned their attention to securing the election of a member of their family as the necessary preliminary to constitutional reform. Finally, Brühl had embittered the strife of parties within Poland and had taken the first step towards forcing Russia to adopt the Prussian policy of destroying the link between Saxony and Poland by the election of a *piast*. In all of these respects Brühl's triumph of 1754 brought the partition of Poland, so long prophesied by her friends, a step nearer to realisation. His reckless reversal of policy was of advantage only to the man he most hated—Frederick II of Prussia.

Brühl's motives for this foolish reversal of policy are obvious. He had long been jealous of the overbearing attitude of the Czartoryski, and the sarcasms of the Cato-like Chancellor of Lithuania on his maladministration aggravated his resentment at the Czartoryski yoke. It did not require much persuasion on his son-in-law's part to convince him that as "the Czartoryskis were the immediate creatures of the court of Petersburg and not the friends of his Polish Majesty . . . it was necessary for the King of Poland to form a party of his own on which he might rely independently of any foreign Power."[1] This policy was spasmodically followed by Brühl from 1750, at

[1] Williams to Holderness, 6 November.

first secretly and with little success, but openly after the middle of 1753. Since Poland had long been (*mutatis mutandis*) in the unhappy state of Sweden, as depicted in the memoirs of Frederick II, of having a Russian party and a French party, but no Swedish party, Brühl's pursuit of his aim under Mniszek's guidance conducted him insensibly into alliance with the French party in Poland.

Possibly Brühl may have been deceived by Frederick II's assertions that Austria was eager to secure the election as successor in Poland of Charles of Lorraine and have believed that Austro-Russian support would not be given to the Saxon candidate at the next election; and he may even have hoped that France would support the candidature either of the Electoral Prince or of one of the younger sons of Augustus III. More probably, however, Brühl did not trouble himself about these contingencies, and his *volte face* may be explained merely as the result of his jealousy of the Czartoryski and his desire to secure a larger share of lucrative offices for himself and his relations. In any case, whether his change of attitude was a deep-laid scheme or a momentary expedient, the French pension of 10,000 ducats a year doubtless had a considerable share in his final decision. The King's influence also, although normally negligible, possibly contributed to the decision. Broglie claimed that he had convinced the King that the Czartoryski were in the wrong in the Ostrog question, and that when Brühl tried to secure the royal consent to the compromise arranged with the Czartoryski Augustus III shouted at his astonished minister-favourite: "Brühl, you are deceiving me." [1]

The critical question now was whether Russia would intervene by arms to support her partisans in Poland, who had at once appealed to her for aid, and were content in the meantime to remain upon the defensive.[2] Brühl also hastened to give explanations of his conduct to Russia, and tried to justify himself by pointing to the overweening power wielded by the Czartoryski and the illegal use they had attempted to make of

[1] Williams to Holderness, 2 December.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 18 November, 12 December.

it in the Ostrog affair.[1] Doubtless these arguments were supported by money bribes to induce Bestuzhev to connive at Brühl's treatment of the Russian party in Poland; and Brühl could also count on the influence which Funcke, the Saxon resident at Petersburg, possessed over the Great Chancellor. The British Government, on the other hand, exerted its influence at Petersburg to defeat Brühl's intrigues,[2] but its influence, owing to the acrimonious negotiation of the treaty of subsidy and the personal quarrel between the Great Chancellor and Guy Dickens, cannot have been great. The court of Petersburg proved as dilatory as usual in making a decision; but, if it were to decide upon armed intervention, there would be no difficulty in finding a pretext. The action of the Great General in the sequestration of the Ostrog and in the election of the Petrikau tribunal manifestly violated the treaty of 1716, which had placed Augustus II on the Polish throne after the expulsion of Stanislas Leczinski, and to this treaty Russia was a party. Moreover, the Czartoryski represented the events of 1754 as a step towards changing the constitution in favour of the monarchy. Fundamental Russian interests dictated that Poland should be kept weak in order to serve as an open door for Russia's entrance to Europe. A reformed Poland, as Williams points out, "in close alliance with Prussia and both supported by French money would become the most formidable enemy Russia has ever yet known and would turn the scale of the North." [3]

Broglie shared Williams's opinion, and sought to turn his victory to account by the restoration on a firmer basis of Argenson's Northern system—a natural reversal of French policy when the menace of war with Britain, presumably supported by her Continental allies, approached nearer day by day. The first step was to draw closer the bonds between Poland and Turkey, and the Great General accordingly arranged to despatch an envoy to the Porte, under the auspices of France, in order to concert measures against their common enemy, Russia.[4] Shortly afterwards a Turkish ambassador with letters

[1] Williams to Holderness, 11 November.
[2] Holderness to Williams (secret), 2 January, 1755.
[3] Williams to Holderness, 6 November; a correct anticipation of Broglie's schemes.
[4] Williams to Holderness, 18 November, etc.

to the Great General arrived in Poland, was received by him in kingly state, and at once became the focus of Prussian [1] and "patriot" intrigue. The next step was obviously to win over Saxony to the French alliance, since Saxony-Poland was the pivot of the whole scheme. Broglie proposed, therefore, that Saxony should be secured by a treaty of subsidy, and among the conditions of the projected treaty Saxony would certainly demand some guarantee of the maintenance of a member of the Saxon House on the Polish throne after Augustus III's death.[2] Broglie must have decided already in his own mind to sacrifice the "King's secret" and his patron's candidature to the manifest interests of France, the official policy of which was not unfavourable to the election of the Electoral Prince on the death of his father.[3]

Brühl, however, was still far from ready to play the part assigned to him in Broglie's schemes. While accepting the help of the French party in Poland, he wished Saxony to remain in the Anglo-Imperial alliance. Why should not the King of Poland and the Elector of Saxony follow different policies? Legally there was no obstacle, but duality of policy was in practice impossible. Brühl, however, refused to admit that his conduct in the domestic affairs of Poland could not but affect the international system of Saxony. He declared that Williams, owing to his personal friendship for the Czartoryski, was misleading the Maritime Powers by his biased reports,[4] and assured them that his conduct in the Ostrog affair was constitutionally correct and had been forced upon him by the lawless insolence of the Czartoryski. His eagerness to convince the Maritime Powers on these points is to be explained by his desire to secure the renewal of the treaty of subsidy of 1751. He had already sounded the United Provinces,[5] and in the middle of November he broached the subject to Williams. Brühl's insinuations failed to convince the British Government,

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 81, 158.

[2] Broglie and the Queen of Poland were already discussing the election of Prince Xavier (A.E. Saxe). Significantly, Brühl spent two hours in explaining to Williams that the union of Saxony and Poland was of no real advantage to the Elector of Saxony, but was a serious drain on the resources of the electorate.

[3] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 244. [4] Holderness to Williams, 20 December, 1754.

[5] Yorke to Hardwicke, 24 September, 1754, in Add. MSS. 35356, f. 253.

which was so annoyed at the cold reception given by its allies to its proposals for securing the Polish succession [1] that it tried to use Brühl's eagerness to renew the subsidy treaty to influence directly his Polish policy. When Brühl on 18 January, 1755, again mentioned the renewal of the treaty to Williams the latter asked for a conference, which took place on 25 January.[2] Williams, in accordance with his instructions, at once turned the discussion upon Polish affairs and denounced Brühl's policy there in the strongest terms, as serving the interests of France and Prussia. Brühl, however, was not in a mood to be convinced that "his present party in Poland are but so many friends, which the French and Prussian ministers have lent him for their own use, and who will abandon him whenever ordered so to do by these ministers." He doubtless consoled himself with the reflection that, if his new Polish friends would desert him for France, his old with equal alacrity would have sacrificed him to Russia.

Later when the conference reached the more detailed discussion of his Polish policy he fell back upon the plea that each step of which Williams complained had been dictated by the King, whose actions Williams dared not censure. The conference was therefore entirely fruitless. Brühl, although somewhat shaken by Williams's arguments,[3] refused to modify his policy in Poland at the behest of his British paymaster.

On this occasion Britain's allies followed her lead. Austria, although she had for some time followed a policy of extreme reserve in Poland, and was soon to offer her support of the Conti candidature as a bribe to France, protested to Brühl against his treatment of the Czartoryski.[4] Shortly afterwards the Russian oracle, which had maintained an unbroken silence for nearly five months, declared itself in no uncertain language. After receiving fresh instructions Gross, in company with Williams, had a long and stormy conference with Brühl on 31 March.[5] Gross first read a long verbose Note drawn up

[1] Holderness to Williams, 20 December.

[2] Williams to Holderness, 29 January; *Geheimnisse*, i, 238, which gives 24 January as the date.

[3] So Saul assured Williams (Williams to Holderness, 29 January).

[4] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 457.

[5] Williams to Holderness, 6 April; Williams to Keith, 11 April, in Add. MSS. 35479, f. 109; Roepell, 107–8 (based on Gross's despatch).

by his court, which was full of complaints that Brühl had neglected the friendly advice of the Tsaritsa; that he was oppressing the Czartoryski, the tried friends of both courts, and giving all his favour to the partisans of France; and that these proceedings were necessarily a blow to the interests of Russia. The Note then declared that Russia was resolved to maintain her guarantee of the treaty of 1716, and to intervene by force if necessary to maintain any party which was oppressed contrary to the constitution. Finally, the Note renewed once again in stronger and indeed minatory terms the advice repeatedly given by Russia in 1753–4 that the King of Poland should return to his old system in Poland, restore the Czartoryski to favour, and thus avert a civil war in which Russia would be reluctantly compelled to intervene.

Brühl, who had continued to believe [1] that Russia would allow his work in Poland to pass with at the most a formal protest, was at first struck dumb; but as Gross proceeded from article to article of this vigorous indictment of his Polish policy he roused himself to indignant protest. "His Polish Majesty," he declared, "made no distinction of persons while they were attached to him and the Republic." [2] "The Czartoryski," he added, "during the whole time of their favour had never done His Polish Majesty any good service in the Diets, but had made use of their credit only for their own advancement." Furious as he was at the nature of the advice, he was still more indignant at the tone in which it was given. The King of Poland, he declared, "would sooner abdicate his crown than receive laws from others," to which Gross replied that the Tsaritsa was giving counsels and not laws. Brühl retorted that "no allied court had ever given counsels that smelt so strongly of threats." To the threat of Russian intervention Brühl replied that if Russia intervened so would France and Prussia. Even his rage at Russian dictation can hardly have blinded him to the fact that, whichever party won, the King of Poland would be the great loser by such a struggle.

Brühl, by adopting a new Polish policy and refusing to alter

[1] Williams to Holderness, 29 January.

[2] There was, he had said on an earlier occasion, " no such thing left [in Poland] as a French or Russian party." (Williams to Holderness, 20 February.)

it to oblige Saxony's allies, had again placed himself in a difficult position between the rival leagues. His jealousy of the Czartoryski had led him to take steps in Poland which endangered Saxony's alliance with Britain and the imperial courts, while he had still, although the French party had become the supporters of the court in Poland, no assurance that Saxony would be welcomed in the Franco-Prussian camp. The events of 1754–5 in Poland bring out very clearly the difficulties in the sphere of foreign policy which the personal union of Saxony and Poland involved for the common sovereign. Brühl sought to evade these difficulties by making advances to both European leagues and leaving the ultimate decision to the logic of events. He did everything, short of changing his Polish policy, to conciliate the Maritime Powers, since he much preferred to continue in the Anglo-Imperial alliance and did not wish to resume his awkward balancing policy of 1746–50.[1] A general well disposed to Britain was appointed to take command of the 6000 Saxon auxiliaries in case their services should be required by Britain,[2] while Flemming and Wiedmarckter bombarded the British Government with letters and notes denouncing Williams's partiality for the Czartoryski, and pointing out that it was ridiculous to accuse their master of being guided by Broglie, since they were still complaining of his conduct to the French Government.[3] Similar attempts were made to convince the Dutch Government that Brühl's Polish policy was not inspired by France, and ought not therefore to be an obstacle to the renewal of the treaty of 1751.[4] Neither of the Maritime Powers, however, in spite of the imminence of war, desired to renew the treaty,[5] the sole object of which had been to secure the election of a King of the Romans. The United Provinces had no intention of taking part in the war; the British Government had decided to purchase the

[1] *Cf.* his instructions to Vitzthum, the new envoy to Versailles, dated 7 September, 1755, in *Geheimnisse*, i, 245–7, 251–5.

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 107, 134.

[3] Flemming to Newcastle, 4 March, 1755, and Brühl to Wiedmarckter, 16 March, in Add. MSS. 32853, ff. 85 and 307 respectively; Holderness to Williams, 11 April (third ordinary letter); *Geheimnisse*, i, 238–42.

[4] Yorke to Newcastle, 22 April (1), 1755, in Add. MSS. 32854, f. 212.

[5] Newcastle to Keene, 28 April, and Newcastle to Flemming, 28 April, in Add. MSS. 32854, ff. 299 and 317 respectively.

assistance of 55,000 Russian auxiliaries, and regarded a paltry 6000 ill-equipped and half-trained Saxon troops as not worth buying at the price demanded by Brühl, especially in view of the Parliamentary opposition to subsidy treaties.

Brühl's simultaneous overtures to France were more successful. The reply of France to his first overtures through his envoys at The Hague [1] and at Versailles for the restoration of the Franco-Saxon subsidy treaty was discouraging, but negotiations continued throughout the summer of 1755.[2] When Broglie returned to Dresden after a prolonged visit to France, where he had exerted himself to secure the French Government's acceptance of his plans for a great Northern system, he brought with him the project of a treaty of subsidy, and was warmly welcomed at Dresden. Brühl and Broglie were now personally on excellent terms,[3] but Brühl soon discovered that the conditions upon which France insisted were quite unacceptable. At the end of 1755 he was still clinging to the Anglo-Imperial alliance, and could not promise a corps of subsidy troops unconditionally to France, still less agree to co-operate with the French party in Poland to resist the entry of Russian troops.[4]

Saxon policy was not, however, the only obstacle to Brühl's complete co-operation with the "patriots." The very completeness of its victory tended to dissolve the Mniszek-Potocki coalition. Brühl's Polish policy was twofold: (1) to secure the maximum pecuniary advantage for himself and his relations, (2) to maintain as far as possible the equilibrium of the two great parties.[5] Under Williams's guidance he had momentarily abandoned the second part of his policy in favour of an exclusive alliance with the Czartoryski; but, without giving the experiment a fair trial, he had in 1754 reverted to his former policy, and, with the aid of the Potocki, restored the equilibrium of parties. The strenuous efforts of the now dominant Potocki completely to crush the Czartoryski awakened Brühl's fears

[1] Stuhr, *Forschungen*, i, 21. [2] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 119, 168, 243.

[3] "From rude and obstinate as he [Broglie] was before he is now become very civil and polite." (Laurence to Holderness, 24 December, 1755.)

[4] Schäfer, i, 119–21; *Geheimnisse*, i, 281; Laurence to Holderness, 14 September, 24, 28, 31 December.

[5] Poniatowski, 144.

and suspicions. The Great General had taken up his residence in the fortress of Dubno (belonging to Prince Sangusko), and was behaving there as an independent sovereign,[1] openly intriguing against Russia with the Tartars and the Porte, while his myrmidons with a mockery of legal forms were revenging themselves upon the partisans of the Czartoryski. Brühl could not but see that he had merely exchanged one servitude for another. He feared that Russia, roused by the Great General's intrigues, might put her threats into force, while the Czartoryski might be provoked by their enemies' proceedings to form a confederation, and, with Russian support, begin a civil war.[2] This was the more to be feared because public opinion among the Polish nobles, which had been alienated from the Czartoryski by their conduct in the Ostrog affair, was now turning once again in their favour, partly owing to the still more violent and selfish conduct of their opponents, but chiefly because only a small proportion of those who had hoped to share in the administration of the Ostrog estates had actually secured recognition of their claims.[3]

Williams hoped that Brühl's fears, combined with the remonstrances of Saxony's allies, would cause a speedy change in his Polish policy. In this he was disappointed. Brühl did indeed give the Czartoryski some share in the distribution of offices,[4] but the Potocki remained the court party. When Williams, in accordance with his instructions, offered shortly before leaving Dresden to arrange a reconciliation between Brühl and the Czartoryski he was mortified by the snub which Brühl hastened to administer.[5] Furious at Brühl's obstinacy and at the ruin of his ambitious plans to become the king-maker

[1] Williams to Holderness, 26 March, etc.

[2] *Cf.* Brühl's conversation with Williams, reported by Williams to Holderness on 5 March; Rulhière, i, 222–3.

[3] The ordination of the Ostrog was finally annulled and Prince Sangusko restored to his estates in May, 1758 (Stormont to Keith, 17 May, in Add. MSS. 35482, f. 100).

[4] Williams to Holderness, 11 June, S.P.F., Russia. Williams and Gross were now using the discarded arguments of France, during the period of Czartoryski ascendancy, that the King of Poland ought " pour ainsi dire dîner dans un camp et souper dans l'autre . . . il n'est pas de la bonne politique de pousser à bout une maison puissante." (A.E. Saxe, 41 : despatch of Boyer, 29 July, 1751.)

[5] Holderness to Williams, 11 April (3rd letter); Williams to Holderness, 28 April, 4 May.

of Poland, he quarrelled violently with Brühl,[1] and left Dresden in May 1755, as he had left Berlin and Vienna, on thoroughly bad terms with the controller of the foreign policy of the court at which he had resided. A few months after his departure the rupture of the Franco-Prussian alliance, in consequence of the Convention of Westminster, destroyed the main obstacle which had hitherto prevented Saxony-Poland's alliance with France. Soon afterwards the Prussian attack upon Saxony drove France and Russia into alliance and enabled Brühl for a time to bring Saxon policy in European questions into harmony with his policy in the domestic affairs of Poland. The work of Williams's eight years at Dresden had rested from the beginning on an insecure foundation, and perished completely in the cataclysm of the Diplomatic Revolution.

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 134–5.

PART II

CHAPTER X

PETERSBURG: THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN SUBSIDY TREATY OF 1755

Williams appointed ambassador at Petersburg—Sketch of the negotiations for an Anglo-Russian treaty of subsidy since 1749—Williams's instructions—His reception at the Russian court—He departs from his instructions—Character of the Great Chancellor—Williams secures Bestuzhev's acceptance of the British terms—Attitude of the Vice-Chancellor—The Empress insists on the addition of two separate and secret articles to the subsidy treaty—Williams proposes a voluntary increase of the first instalment of subsidy—A question of etiquette—The British Government rejects the additional articles, but offers a compromise—Signature of the convention on 30 September—Tension between Russia and Turkey owing to the building of Fort St Elizabeth—The Russian court under Elizabeth—Character of the Empress—Her illness—The young court—Character of the Grand Duke Peter and the Grand Duchess Catherine—Bestuzhev's relations to the young court—Rise of the Shuvalovs—Threat to the Great Chancellor's position—Beginning of Williams's friendship with the Grand Duchess.

It is persons and passions that govern [*at the court of Russia*] *and without keys to both a minister must be two or three years at Petersburg before he is able to do His Majesty any service.*—Sir C. H. Williams to the Earl of Holderness, 30 August, 1757.

On 9 April Williams received formal intimation that he had been appointed H.M. ambassador at Petersburg, and his instructions reached him ten days later. The relations of Guy Dickens with the Great Chancellor had gone steadily from bad to worse,[1] until at last he had applied for his recall. "My years," he wrote,[2]

> the infirmities I feel creeping upon me, the intemperancy of this climate . . . I hope will justify me in desiring my release from this station . . . the good of the King's service requires that H.M. should have at this court a minister in the full strength and vigour of his age as in their way of thinking here they look upon a foreign minister not missing a court day ball masquerade play opera or any other public diversion to be the chief and principal object of his mission which I cannot do and yet is absolutely necessary.

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[1] Dickens to Holderness, *passim*, especially 10/21 September, 1754.

[2] Dickens to Holderness, 7/18 February, in Add. MSS. 32852, f. 525, partly printed in Raumer, *Frederick II*, 214. *Cf.* Dickens to Holderness, 28 February/11 March, in Add. MSS. 32854, f. 224.

Williams had from the beginning of his diplomatic career coveted the title of ambassador, and was overjoyed at the realisation of his ambitions after so many disappointments. Quite apart from the title, which tickled his inordinate vanity, promotion to the court of one of the Great Powers gave him a chance to display on a wider field his talents as a diplomatist and to influence the general affairs of Europe. He had, it is true, contrived even in his subordinate position at Dresden to engage the British Government upon the ill-fated election question, but he himself had had but a small share in the attempt to execute it. Subsequently the imminence of a general war and Brühl's adroit balancing policy had given Saxony-Poland an adventitious importance, and Williams had become the central link in the chain of British diplomacy in Eastern Europe. But he had failed to secure the British Government's adoption of his scheme for electing a successor to the King of Poland. This failure and the quarrel of Brühl with the Czartoryski reduced Williams to the part of a mere spectator in Poland. At Petersburg he would be at the veritable centre of the affairs of Eastern Europe, whereas Warsaw was at best the most important point on the circumference. And he would no longer be a mere spectator at a second-rate court, but one of the leading actors on the European stage. It is upon his work at Petersburg that Williams's reputation as a diplomatist must stand or fall.

The "secret instructions" [1] which he received before leaving Dresden on 14 May prescribed the conclusion of the subsidy treaty as "the chief and principal object" of his attention. This treaty in one form or another had been the central point in Anglo-Russian relations since 1746. Bestuzhev had been the first to propose it, and the Empress-Queen had strongly urged it upon the British Government. In its earlier stages it had been closely connected with the negotiation of Britain's accession to the Treaty of the Two Empresses, Bestuzhev demanding a subsidy of £150,000 a year for 30,000 troops, since the terms of the British accession bound Russia (and Austria) to defend Hanover, although George II did not accede as Elector of Hanover.[2]

[1] In S.P.F., Russia (endorsed 11 April, 1755).
[2] Dickens to Newcastle, January–February, 1750, *passim*; *O.S.*, ii, 49 ff.

Chiefly owing to the insuperable Parliamentary opposition to ordinary treaties of subsidy concluded in time of peace and to the largeness of the sum required, Newcastle had turned a deaf ear, and had embarked instead upon the election of a King of the Romans, which soon proved to be hardly less expensive than the proposed subsidy treaty with Russia would have been. Britain's acceptance of the policy urged upon her by Austria would have conciliated both Austria and Russia and have strengthened enormously the old system, whereas the adoption of the election project at the expense of the Russian treaty of subsidy offended Bestuzhev, and ultimately caused considerable friction between Britain and Austria. Moreover, partly owing to the election project, but chiefly owing to the quarrel over the Silesian loan and the Prussian ships, Britain's relations with Prussia grew steadily worse, and George II's fears for the safety of his electorate made him a convert to the policy of subsidising Russia. Newcastle also began to see that the princes he had hired in Germany would hardly dare to give their votes unless they were assured against Prussian resentment [1] by the presence of a Russian army of observation on Prussia's exposed eastern frontier. The King of Prussia's appointment of the ex-Jacobite Lord Marischal as his ambassador to the French court was an additional cause of much exaggerated alarm to Newcastle. The countenance given by this appointment to the Pretender would, he wrote,[2] "make the Russian subsidy as popular here, as I, in my conscience, think it makes it necessary."

The British Government was therefore forced to take up, in a modified form, the scheme it had rejected in 1749, and to try and combine it with the election project. Bestuzhev was delighted at the turn of events, and determined to press his advantage to the uttermost. His demands astonished the British Government, which had already dipped deeply into the Exchequer to provide luxuries for the princes of Germany. The Russian Government then tried to enforce its demands by threatening, now that the Swedish crisis of 1749–51 was over, to withdraw its troops from the frontiers to the interior, where they could be

[1] Dickens to Newcastle, 4 May, O.S., 1751 (S.P.F., Russia).
[2] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 6 September, 1751, in *Pelham Administration*, ii, 406.

more easily and more cheaply fed,[1] but would no longer paralyse the military action of Prussia. Consequently the negotiation made little progress,[2] especially as the British Government soon afterwards reluctantly dropped the election project, which had been one of the main motives on the British side for taking the negotiation seriously. The other main British motive—fear of a Prussian attack on Hanover—continued, but was gradually reduced from its place of primary importance to that of a mere incident in a world conflict between Britain and France, supported by their respective allies. In view of this impending conflict, which would tax to the utmost the resources of the British Crown, it was essential to secure the maximum possible support from our Continental allies, especially as British politicians assumed that Prussia, the intimate ally of France and on the worst terms with Britain, would join without hesitation in the struggle. Doubtless George II's fears for his electorate, a tempting bait to Prussia, gave an added zeal to their approaches to their allies, but it was their manifest duty, in view of the prospect of a maritime and colonial war, to consolidate Britain's system on the Continent. Austria when approached gave the usual vague assurances of support, but insisted more strongly than ever that Britain—no matter what it cost—must buy the assistance of Russia.[3] Still less satisfactory was the response of the United Provinces, where an influential and growing party, intimidated by the Franco-Prussian alliance, which placed the United Provinces, with their dilapidated barrier, ill-disciplined troops, and ruinous constitution, between two fires, openly threatened to desert Britain and make terms with France unless Britain took effective measures with Austria and Russia for their defence.[4]

[1] Dickens to Newcastle, 4 May, O.S., 1751 (S.P.F., Russia).

[2] See " General State of the Negotiation with the Court of Russia for a Treaty of Subsidy and of the Conditions concluded in September 1755," in S.P.F., Russia, 61 *ad fin.* *Cf.* Dickens's correspondence with Newcastle and Holderness in S.P.F., Russia ; *Pol. Corr.*, x, 22–5, 76–101, etc. (based on the despatches of Funcke, Bestuzhev's confidant, to Brühl and including copies of the various official documents).

[3] Austria, quite apart from the Kaunitz policy of *rapprochement* with France, was unwilling to be dragged into war at the heels of her ally at a time when the Ottoman Porte was restive and the Croats were in revolt. (*Pol. Corr.*, xi, 127, 159.)

[4] W. Bentinck to Newcastle, 22 April, 1755, in Add. MSS. 32854, f. 210. *Cf.* Yorke to Newcastle (private), 3 June, in Add. MSS. 32855, f. 312 : " This country alone . . . will never be engaged single-handed or even be the first to resist France in the Netherlands."

The Russo-British Treaty of 1742 obliged Russia to send 12,000 men to the defence of Great Britain if attacked, but it was highly doubtful if (in the event of a war arising out of a quarrel between Britain and Prussia) Russia would be obliged to march these troops to the assistance of Hanover. Even if Russia agreed that such an attack was comprised in the *casus fœderis* the slow concentration and leisurely advance of Russian troops across Poland and Germany would cause a delay which would almost certainly prove fatal. In any case a paltry 12,000 troops, even co-operating with other subsidiary corps and the Hanoverian forces, was obviously inadequate for the defence of Hanover against the finest fighting force in Europe. The only effective way of defending Hanover seemed to be a prompt and powerful Russian diversion on Prussia's weak eastern frontier, which would force Prussia to fight simultaneously in the east and in the west and cripple, if it did not avert, the attack on Hanover. Thus early in 1755 the subsidy negotiation with Russia had become a matter of life and death to Britain. The Tsaritsa was well aware of the strength of her position, and was in no hurry to conclude the treaty, since the nearer the approach of war between Britain and France the more vital it became for Britain and the better the terms which could be extorted from her.

The main concrete differences between Britain and Russia were (1) the wide difference between Russian pecuniary demands and British offers, and (2) Russia's insistence upon the exclusion from the *casus fœderis* of an attack upon Britain's allies, and even at times of an attack upon Hanover, as a result of a Franco-British quarrel, since the protection extended to Hanover at the time of Britain's accession to the Treaty of 1746 was valid only against an attack "en haine de cet accession." [1] Williams's instructions enabled him in the last resort to come near to compliance with the pecuniary demands of Russia—unless, as was not improbable,[2] Russia's favourable position for bargaining induced her to raise her terms—on condition that Russia gave way on the second point.

[1] *O.S.*, ii, 57.

[2] Holderness to Williams, 11 April (very secret). On this ground this letter authorised Williams to make "some small extension" of the provisional subsidy, but on no account to increase the large subsidy.

The second object of Williams's instructions [1] was less urgent, but hardly less important—the renewal of the general treaty of defensive alliance of 1742 between Britain and Russia, which was "the basis and foundation of our alliance with the court of Russia," [1] and expired in 1757. Closely connected with the question of its renewal was the commercial treaty of 1734, which would have expired in 1754 "had it not been expressly renewed by the treaty of 1742 to be of equal duration with the treaty itself." [1] The British Government was eager to secure the renewal of the political part of the treaty; but, as the Russia Company had certain objections in detail to the commercial treaty of 1734 which was now blended with the political treaty, Williams was to find out from Baron Wolff, the British consul at Petersburg, what alterations, if any, the British merchants at Petersburg wished to have made in the treaty, and not to engage himself "too far as to the renewal of the treaty of 1742 in its present shape" until he received more explicit instructions.[2]

These two points were the sole but vitally important objects of Williams's negotiation at Petersburg. To attain them he was instructed to avoid the mistake of his predecessor, Guy Dickens, and to "take all proper methods of cultivating an intimate and confidential friendship with the Great Chancellor and be extremely cautious of giving him any, the least cause of jealousy from [his] connections with any other favourites or ministers in Russia." [3] In order to get the Chancellor to exert his influence at Petersburg to conclude the convention, Williams was authorised [4] to offer him not more than £10,000 conditional on exchange of the ratifications, and if absolutely necessary to promise him a regular pension for the future.

Williams was welcomed with open arms at Petersburg. He had the character of ambassador, and ambassadors at Petersburg were rare, and therefore highly esteemed. His reputation had preceded him, and the semi-barbarous Russian court was

[1] Holderness to Williams, 11 April (second ordinary letter).

[2] Orders to secure renewal of the treaties of 1734 and 1742 unaltered were despatched on 24 July (Holderness to Williams, separate).

[3] Holderness to Williams, 11 April (very secret).

[4] Holderness to Williams (most secret), 11 April, 1755, in Newport Papers. Subsequently Williams was ordered to make his offers by degrees, "particularly the personal part" (Holderness to Williams (private), 17 June, in Newport Papers).

curious to see this finished product of the civilisation of the West, which they admired and copied without understanding. But the chief reason for the warmth of his reception at Petersburg was that every one shared the Great Chancellor's idea that Williams had "in his train a large wagon loaded with nothing else but ducats," [1] and all were eager to share in the spoils. The two Chancellors vied with each other in professions of friendship towards him and of zeal to secure the conclusion of the convention; the other members of the college of foreign affairs and the hangers-on of the Chancellor flocked around him with visibly itching palms. Williams—a true follower of Walpole in this respect—had always been too ready to offer bribes, and he foolishly accepted the assurances of the venal courtiers and politicians, although not quite at their face value, at much more than their real worth. Within a fortnight of his arrival, before he could possibly be sure of the ground, especially as the Dutch minister, Swart, avoided him, and Esterhazy, his former Austrian colleague at Dresden, was on the worst of terms with the Great Chancellor,[2] he asked Holderness for "some small additional helps" [3] which were "absolutely necessary for carrying on His Majesty's business at this court with despatch as well as with success." [4] Olsuviev, who combined the post of master of ceremonies with membership of the college of foreign affairs, and was the confidant and director of the Vice-Chancellor Voronzov; Funcke,[5] who held the hardly compatible posts of Saxon minister and confidential secretary to the Great Chancellor; and Volkov, another of Bestuzhev's secretaries, were the three candidates selected by Williams from the crowd of applicants. Soon afterwards he suggested that the Vice-Chancellor himself, if he acted up to his professions, should be handsomely rewarded.

[1] Dickens to Holderness, 6/17 May, S.P.F., Russia.

[2] Keith to Holderness, reporting a conversation with Kaunitz, in Add. MSS. 32851, f. 6; Williams to Holderness, 23 June/4 July.

[3] These were at once granted. (Holderness to Williams, 24 July (most secret).) Williams was merely following the example of his predecessors, but his bribes were very much larger than those of Hyndford and Dickens.

[4] Williams to Holderness, 23 June/4 July. Short extracts from the Holderness-Williams correspondence after this date have been published in Raumer, *Frederick II*, 220–43, 260–5, 294–7, etc.; after Mitchell's arrival at Berlin there are longer extracts in *Pol. Corr.*, xii, xiii, xiv.

[5] *Cf.* Dickens to Newcastle, 12 October, 1751, in S.P.F., Russia.

Thus instead of following his instructions, which were to depend exclusively upon the Great Chancellor, Williams, whose head was turned by the interested flattery paid to him on all sides, tried to win over Bestuzhev's enemies. It is true that he had Bestuzhev's approval, and even encouragement, in this policy, and his main reliance continued to be placed upon the Chancellor, who had so long been the bulwark of British interests at the Russian court. Adroit rather than capable, a past master in the arts of dissimulation and intrigue, Bestuzhev preferred to gain his ends by the most tortuous methods. Avarice and the lust for power were his ruling passions. A low forehead, little beady eyes, and a shifty mouth composed a most unattractive exterior, but gave a not unfair indication of his character. His quarrelsome and suspicious disposition, determination to do things in his own way, and insistence that his friends should share his numerous personal vendettas, made it difficult to co-operate successfully with him, and the envoys of Russia's closest allies frequently suffered from his vindictive spite. His long tenure of office was due mainly to the fact that he, alone of Russian ministers, had a clearly defined system and the resolution to follow it out, and to overcome, by a mixture of cajolery and coercion, the hesitations of the Empress, which were due partly to natural indolence and partly to suspicion of his interested motives. Even his friends could not deny his many failings,[1] but added that if he was an implacable enemy he was also a steady friend.

Bestuzhev's rise from obscurity to the highest office in the Russian State and his retention of power for more than a decade, in spite of the continual efforts of court cabals and foreign diplomatists to dislodge him, proves his resourcefulness, combativeness, and strength of purpose. His colleague Voronzov was a man of another type. Voronzov began with many advantages denied to Bestuzhev. He claimed descent from an old Boyar family, the origins of which were lost in the mists of Russian medieval history. He had taken a leading part in the revolution which had placed Elizabeth on the throne. But Elizabeth soon discovered that he was immensely inferior to Bestuzhev not only in knowledge of affairs, but in every quality of character. He

[1] Herzen Memoir, 7.

had none of Bestuzhev's virtues and, except quarrelsomeness and drunkenness, most of his vices. His most notable characteristics were timidity, double-dealing, venality, and, above all, complete insufficiency for the office which he held. While Bestuzhev leaves on one's mind the impression of an unpleasant but vigorous and strongly marked personality, Voronzov's career is one of insignificance verging on futility. Even after Bestuzhev's fall, when he received the office of Great Chancellor, he remained as insignificant as ever.

Williams first found out from Funcke and Volkov the smallest sums which Bestuzhev would accept,[1] and then on 1 July he had a lengthy private conference with Bestuzhev and Funcke. He began by making offers less than the minimum indicated by Funcke and Volkov. These were refused without hesitation. Williams then handed in his ultimatum, which was accepted by the Great Chancellor. Bestuzhev promised to do his utmost to secure the Tsaritsa's acceptance of the British project of convention in exchange for a provisional subsidy of £100,000 a year, to be raised to £500,000 a year after the troops had crossed the frontier.[2] This was £100,000 a year less by way of provisional subsidy than Bestuzhev had previously asked for, but the imminence of a conflict between Britain and France made it almost certain that the troops would be requisitioned by Britain very soon after the ratification of the treaty, and the amount of the provisional subsidy became, therefore, of less importance. Bestuzhev's acceptance of Williams's ultimatum was, however, chiefly due to the larger bribe now offered to him by Britain.[3] Dickens had offered £5000; Williams on previous occasions had gone as far as £8000 without success;[3] now he raised the offer to £10,000. "Such public and private offers made at once," Williams reported,[3] "struck him, and with joy in his face he told me . . . he would accept and support what I had offered." Williams regarded the private offer as "the spring which gave

[1] Williams to Holderness, 31 July/11 August.

[2] Holderness and Robinson accused Williams of exceeding his instructions in agreeing upon these terms, but they were undoubtedly in the wrong, and Newcastle strongly supported Williams's interpretation of his instructions. (Holderness to Williams (secret), 24 July; Williams to Holderness, 31 July/11 August; Newcastle to Hardwicke, 26 July, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 384b.)

[3] Williams to Holderness, 31 July/11 August.

motion and success to the public ones," but both were necessary, since the Great Chancellor's influence with the Empress was just reviving after a serious decline,[1] and would not have been sufficient to secure her acceptance of lesser offers. The bribe would free Bestuzhev from the pressure of his debts, while the arranging of the subsidy, which he could represent as extracted by his astute diplomacy from an unwilling ally, would greatly strengthen his credit with the Tsaritsa.

At his public conference with the Chancellors[2] on 19 July Williams, by previous arrangement with the Great Chancellor, at once handed in his ultimatum. The Vice-Chancellor first tried to extract an additional £50,000 a year on account of the galleys which the Tsaritsa was to supply if the troops were requisitioned; failing in this, he demanded a declaration, about which Williams promised to write for instructions, that the troops would not be requisitioned in the event of a war confined to America or Italy only. Both Chancellors then promised to advise the Empress to sign the convention.

It remained to secure the Empress's consent—no empty formality. Elizabeth's distaste for business was notorious, and she was at the moment at one of her country palaces enjoying the society of her latest favourite, Ivan Ivanovitch Shuvalov, freed from the formalism and restrictions of court etiquette. Williams after his arrival had lost no time in getting into touch with Shuvalov, and cultivated his acquaintance so successfully that he boasts to the Secretary of State that he and Shuvalov "are at present in a correspondence of letters together."[3] The Great Chancellor co-operated loyally, and sent the draft convention and other necessary papers to Shuvalov, who persuaded the Empress to read them and then to send for the Chancellors. She accepted the British draft without any important change, although the Great Chancellor, in accordance with her orders, pressed Williams to increase the preliminary subsidy. Williams refused the request, but promised after the conclusion of the

[1] Williams to Holderness, 31 July/11 August; Titley to Holderness, 11 March, in Add. MSS. 32854, f. 226; *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 9–11, 42.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 8/19 July, 31 July/11 August; Martens, ix, 183.
[3] Williams to Holderness, 31 July/11 August.

convention to recommend his court to make some additional payment on account of the heavy expenses incurred by the Empress,[1] and with this promise the Chancellor professed himself satisfied. But although the Empress made no alterations, she insisted upon adding two new separate and secret articles of vital importance. On the ground that as she was to have so large a share in the war she ought also to have some share in the peace, the Empress, with memories of the ignominious exclusion of her plenipotentiaries from Aix, insisted upon the inclusion of clause XVII of the Russian project:

> Les deux hautes parties contractantes s'engagent et se promettent de ne faire avec l'ennemi commun aucune paix séparément l'une sans l'autre et par conséquent de n'entrer avec lui en aucune négociation sans le consentement préalable de l'autre part. . . .

Secondly, she inserted a separate and secret article which Williams believed was due to her desire not to promise more than she could actually perform. Its effect was, however, to destroy the whole value of the convention to Great Britain,[2] since it virtually postponed the marching of the Russian troops stationed in Livonia across the frontier until three months after the date of the British requisition,[3] although it was expressly stated in the body of the convention that the general commanding the Livonian corps was to march across the frontier immediately on receipt of the British requisition, without waiting even for orders from Petersburg. Williams failed to appreciate the vital importance of these articles, and signed them *sub spe rati* after the feeblest resistance. He excuses his action by alleging the urgent nature of his instructions, the imminence of war between Britain and France, and the impossibility of altering what the Empress had inserted without postponing the conclusion of the convention perhaps for months. The convention was accordingly signed on 9 August.

The insertion of these articles ought to have given Williams furiously to think, but he was still in the honeymoon of his

[1] Williams's Note (appended to his despatch to Holderness of 31 July/11 August).
[2] Holderness to Williams, 28 August.
[3] Martens, ix, 184.

Ministry[1] and blind to the realities of the situation at Petersburg.

[Elizabeth's] "aversion to France and Prussia," he reports,

> grows daily stronger and her attachment to the King and his allies increases so fast that I will engage, weak as I am, by help of those little assistances which I have asked of the King, to put this Court into H.M. hands more than ever it was yet in those of any other sovereign, and that nothing shall be done here that shall be contrary to H.M. inclinations or different from what he shall dictate.

Williams's one fear was that Voronzov was insincere, and he proposed to present him with a ring (of the value of £500) on the exchange of ratifications, although in the same despatch he assured Holderness that the Vice-Chancellor "knows his interest too well to dare at this time to whisper anything that has the appearance of an opposition to an English measure at this court."[2]

It is not difficult to reconcile Williams's optimism with his continual demands for money, since he believed that if he paid a high enough price everything and everybody at Petersburg, including the Empress, could be bought.[3] In a separate and very secret letter to Holderness,[4] sent along with the convention, he proposed to extend his system of bribery to the Empress herself by increasing the first payment of the provisional subsidy from £100,000 to £150,000. This, Bestuzhev assured him, would be "a sort of personal obligation to Her Imperial Majesty," since the first instalment was destined to the Empress's privy purse, which had been drained by the cost of building and rebuilding some of her country palaces. If this could be done the Great Chancellor promised that it "would put both this court and the Empress entirely into H.M.'s management." The treaties of 1734 and 1742 would be immediately renewed, and Russia would exert all her influence at Vienna to persuade

[1] The phrase is Williams's own.

[2] *Contra, Archives Voronzov*, v, 25.

[3] This was the accepted view in diplomatic circles. *Cf.* Keith to Newcastle (private), 23 July, 1754, in Add. MSS. 32849, f. 364, and Flemming to Newcastle, 24 July, 1754, *ibid.*, f. 372; Yorke to Newcastle, 18 June, 1756, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 339.

[4] Williams to Holderness, 31 July/11 August.

the court of Austria to "act with more cordiality towards the Maritime Powers than they have lately done."

The British Government, although they thought Williams had not haggled sufficiently over the subsidy and bribes, was delighted with the speedy conclusion of the convention, especially as Boscawen's attack upon the *Alcide* and the *Lys*, and the resultant rupture of diplomatic relations with France, made war practically certain. Former experiences, however, made them much more suspicious of the Russian negotiators than their credulous ambassador, and his preliminary indications [1] of the additional articles insisted on by Russia intensified these suspicions.[2] When the eagerly expected convention actually arrived at Hanover it was at once seen that Williams had prejudiced the honour of the British Crown by giving the precedence to Russia both in the text of the treaty and in the manner of its signature. The King was furious,[3] and the ministers suspected that the Russian court was trying (despite express provisions to the contrary in the treaty of 1742) to take advantage of Britain's recognition of the imperial title of the Tsars to usurp the ceremonial pre-eminence granted by long-established precedents by even the haughtiest of royal courts to the successor of imperial Rome at Vienna.

Apart from this gross and apparently inexcusable blunder, the British Government objected to the second and third secret articles. The second secret article the Government would not accept as it stood, but sent a modified version, which, after the outbreak of war had given rise to the *casus fœderis*, bound the contracting parties to communicate confidentially to each other any negotiation with the common enemy and to co-operate in procuring a peace honourable and advantageous to both parties.[4]

[1] Williams to Holderness, 14/25 July.

[2] Holderness to Williams, 19 August.

[3] Holderness's censure in the first draft of his reply was not strong enough to please the King, who insisted upon its being strengthened. (Holderness to Williams (private), 18 November, in Newport Papers.) *Cf.* Holderness to Newcastle (*entre nous*), 27 August, in Add. MSS. 32858, f. 302 : " I never saw the King more offended in all my life."

[4] The British Government's interpretation of the text it proposed is clearly given in the ' General State ' : " By another secret article the Contracting Powers engage in case a war should break out to communicate to each other any negotiation they may either of them set on foot with the

The third secret article could not possibly be ratified since, as Holderness pointed out, it permitted a delay of three months after the date of the requisition before the Russian troops marched to the assistance of Britain. Finally, the secret declaration excluding from the *casus fœderis* a war confined to Italy or America was denounced as "quite unnecessary," although Williams was given permission to sign it if the Russian ministers insisted.

That the British Government was seriously alarmed by the obstacles raised by the second and third secret articles and feared that the rupture of Franco-British diplomatic relations would make the Russian Government still more intractable, is proved by the permission given to Williams [1] to add £25,000 to the first instalment of the provisional subsidy, on condition that the third article was cancelled and the second altered to conform to the British version, and also that the Great Chancellor engaged to renew without further delay the treaties of 1734 and 1742. Although less optimistic than Williams, his Government shared his views as to the best road to success at the court of Petersburg.

Williams's chagrin on receipt of these despatches may be easily imagined.[2] He hastened to inform his Government that there had really been no deviation from the usual ceremonial, but that the original copy of the treaty, which ought to have remained in the Russian chancery, and which therefore gave precedence to Russia, had been despatched by him to London, while the original copy destined to be ratified by the King and giving precedence to Britain had been retained by the Chancellors.[3] Williams then saw the Great Chancellor privately, and obtained his promise to use his influence with the Empress to annul the third and modify the second secret article.[4] At first the Vice-Chancellor insisted that a secret declaration to the same effect as the proposed third separate and secret article should be

enemy and to endeavour to procure for each other honorable and advantageous terms of peace." The text of the article is given in Wenck, iii, 83.

[1] This power he did not require to use. (Williams to Holderness, 21 September/2 October.)

[2] Poniatowski, who was with Williams when he opened the despatches, described to Coxe (during Coxe's tour in Poland) his extravagant behaviour after he had read them. (Coxe, *Historical Tour in Monmouthshire*, ii, 275.)

[3] Williams to Holderness, 13 September, N.S.

[4] Williams to Holderness, 16 September, N.S.

added, but ultimately this demand was withdrawn, and the convention [1] was signed on 30 September on the terms desired by the British Government without any alteration or addition, and at the same time the original copies of the unratified convention of 9 August were exchanged "with shame on both sides."

Williams had now accomplished his main business at Petersburg. During the summer of 1755 his only other task was to avert the danger of war between Russia and the Porte over the old question of the fort which Russia was building on the Ingul river.[2] The fear of a rupture between Russia and Turkey, at a time when Britain wished Russia to play a large part in a general European war, alarmed the British Government,[3] since it would divide and distract Russia's attention, and would certainly involve Austria either as an auxiliary or as a principal. The revival of the Ingul fort project, Holderness wrote,[3] "would bring about what France and Prussia have hitherto in vain attempted and destroy at once the possibility of forming such a system as might enable us to make head against those Powers in Europe." If Russia would unconditionally abandon the building of the Ingul fort Williams was authorised to increase the preliminary subsidy to £125,000 *per annum*. These increased offers were due only in part to the British Government's fear of a Russo-Turkish war; more influential was Austria's refusal to send reinforcements to the Low Countries till the subsidy treaty with Russia was concluded. Newcastle, Hardwicke, and Robinson, now Secretary of State for the Southern Department, accordingly met at Powis House [4] and agreed upon the increase in the proposed subsidies, and Holderness sent fresh instructions to Williams in consequence.[5] Williams, as he was ordered to do, took up the question of the Ingul fort with a high hand and treated the Great Chancellor to a long, ranting oration [6] on the

[1] S.P.F., Treaties, 438 ; copies in S.P.F., Treaty Papers, 62 ; printed in Martens, ix, 191–200.

[2] *Supra*, Chapter IX, p. 162. Porter to Holderness, 17 May, etc., in S.P.F.; Porter to Williams, 25 July, in Add. MSS. 35482, f. 48.

[3] Holderness to Williams (separate), 17 June.

[4] Memorandum in Add. MSS. 32855, f. 314.

[5] Newcastle to Holderness, 6 June, in Add. MSS. 32855, f. 353b ; Holderness to Newcastle, 18 June, in Add. MSS. 32856, f. 21.

[6] Reported in Williams's letter to Holderness of 23 June/4 July.

stupidity of Russian policy in exciting Turkey to war. The Great Chancellor protested that he had always been an enemy to the scheme, which he attributed to Olsuviev, and after some hesitation agreed to write a private letter to the Russian resident at Constantinople ordering him not to take any further steps in the affair, and nothing more was heard of it.

In these early months Williams, in spite of ill health, and in marked contrast to his predecessor, entered with zest into all the diversions of the extravagant and profligate court. The belief that the British Government and Williams himself hoped that he would captivate the fickle Empress and attain thereby a control over Russian policy such as had been exercised at one time by a former French ambassador, La Chétardie, finds no support in any official document.[1] This is no proof that such an intention did not exist, but if it existed it seems a foolish hope. Apart from her earliest lover and reputed husband, Rasumovski, nearly all Elizabeth's favourites had been mere boys. It was hardly likely that she would be fascinated by a fat and pompous *roué*, well on in the forties, and prematurely aged by the life he had led. Williams's elaborate flatteries, although their novelty doubtless made them for a time attractive to her, could hardly seduce the ignorant and illiterate Empress. Such education as she acquired had been picked up in the servants' hall,[2] and the favourite diversions of her youth—amorous intrigues and drinking parties—were enjoyed in company with the troopers of the imperial guard, to whom chiefly she owed her elevation to the throne. Until the last few years of her life, in spite of her love of feminine finery, she was more at home in the saddle than at court, and in the barrack room than in the council chamber. In point of fact, although Williams was enraptured at the Empress's "graciousness" to him in these early months,[3] her behaviour towards him personally was never more than the ambassador of one of Russia's two principal allies had the right to expect. On all occasions,

[1] The appointment of Yorke chiefly on this ground had, however, been seriously considered at one time—March, 1754. (Yorke to Hardwicke in Add. MSS. 35356, ff. 232 and 234.)

[2] Kluchevsky, iv, 354.

[3] Williams to Holderness, 27 June/7 July and 6 September, N.S.

however, she professed the keenest anxiety not only for Britain's success in the American war, but for the personal safety of George II.

"Her Majesty asked me," Williams reported on one occasion,

> where I thought the King might then be? To which I answered it was probable His Majesty might be in his passage over to England; she replied she did not like to have the King upon the sea and that she should not be easy till she heard that he was safely landed and desired I would send her that good news the very moment I received it.[1]

The Empress's health [2] was already giving anxiety not only to her medical advisers, but to the whole court. The bad relations subsisting between the "old court" of the Empress and the "young court" of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess [3] made certain that the death of the Empress would be followed by great changes of *personnel*, if not of measures, at Petersburg. The leading officials and courtiers were already occupied with the difficult task of retaining the favour of the Empress without offending the "young court," and this crisis in the health of the Empress redoubled their exertions by impressing upon them for the first time that the change of rulers might come at any moment. The Grand Duke Peter, Elizabeth's heir-designate, was a weedy and feeble-minded young man, whose education had been badly neglected.[4] He was far from being entirely evil, and could show on occasion flashes of nobility, but his mental development had been arrested at the stage of a moderately intelligent child of twelve.[5] He vacillated between a childish fear of the Empress and a sincere admiration for his brilliant wife, Sophia of Anhalt-Zerbst, the future Catherine the Great. Left to himself, he would spend hours playing with

[1] This remark would appear to disprove the popular belief (Bain, 137) that Elizabeth's ignorance of geography was such that she believed Britain was part of the Continent.

[2] Williams to Holderness (separate and most secret), 21 September/2 October. Williams reports that she was suffering from chronic asthma and dropsy, and refused to submit to the directions of her physicians. "There is," he adds, "actually a machine making to carry Her Imperial Majesty from one floor to another without obliging her to mount the stairs."

[3] The most elaborate study of the young court is to be found in Waliszewski, *Le Roman d'une Impératrice*, Part I.

[4] Herzen Memoir, 6, 43. [5] Kluchevsky, iv, 358–9; Bain, 190–1.

toy soldiers [1] in the quiet hours of night in the grand ducal bed, while Catherine lay by his side in a cold fury of loathing and contempt.[2] In the early months of Williams's stay at Petersburg the ill-assorted couple, thanks to Catherine's marvellous self-control, still contrived to live without open discord, although Catherine had already sought consolation for her husband's neglect in the arms of the first of a long series of lovers.[3] Her intellectual ascendancy over her husband [4] was still undisputed, and no one could doubt that "Her Imperial Highness is the person who in case of accidents will rule here." [5] The position of the grand ducal couple was, however, by no means secure, since there were persistent rumours that Elizabeth meant to disinherit them in favour of Prince Ivan, who had been imprisoned in a fortress after Elizabeth's accession had driven him, while still an infant, from the throne. Ivan's claims were, it was said, secretly supported by Austria, but Catherine had already removed one cause of the Empress's displeasure with herself and her husband by giving birth to a son—Paul I. It was doubtless to diminish still further the danger that the Empress might make Ivan her heir that Catherine, who during her early years in Russia had suffered much from Bestuzhev's enmity and had been closely associated with the Shuvalovs,[6] had now become reconciled to the Great Chancellor [7] and was, Williams believed, entirely governed by him. Bestuzhev had made sure, as far as was humanly possible, that he would be continued in office after the death of the Empress, but his preparations, furtive and carefully concealed as they were, can hardly have escaped the Empress's notice, and must have predisposed her against him. On the other hand, the Vice-Chancellor and his party depended entirely upon Elizabeth's recovery, since the basis of their power was "the solid interest" of the Vice-Chancellor's wife with the Empress,

[1] Herzen Memoir, 233.
[2] *Ibid.*, 79.
[3] Catherine's *Memoirs*, 247–9.
[4] "The Grand Duke's confidence in the Grand Duchess is so great that sometimes he tells people that though he does not understand things himself yet his wife understands everything." (Williams to Holderness (separate and most secret), 21 September/2 October.) *Cf.* Herzen Memoir, 239.
[5] Williams to Holderness (separate and most secret), 21 September/2 October. *Cf.* Williams to Newcastle (private), 19 February, 1756, in Add. MSS. 32863, f. 25.
[6] Catherine's *Memoirs*, 125, 173, 183–6.
[7] *Ibid.*, 251.

and they doubtless represented Bestuzhev's relations with the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess in the blackest colours to her.

Meantime a new force appeared at Petersburg which complicated the perennial rivalry of the two Chancellors. Hitherto, with the exception of Rasumovski,[1] upon whom Bestuzhev counted to balance the influence of the Vice-Chancellor's wife over the Empress, Elizabeth's favourites had enjoyed very short spells of favour and had never played that part in politics which Bestuzhev's enemies had hoped. Now, in 1754, Ivan Ivanovitch Shuvalov had become and long remained the established favourite. He belonged to an important family, and two of his cousins, the brothers Peter and Alexander Shuvalov, held high military and civil offices under the Crown.[2] Soon he added to the duties of favourite those of confidential secretary and adviser, hitherto discharged by Rasumovski, the ally of Bestuzhev, and on this dual basis a third party virtually grew up at the Russian court. This new party would naturally tend to oppose the Bestuzhev-Rasumovski faction, although at first the opposition was not irreconcilable.[3]

It was doubtless Bestuzhev's fear of the increasing suspicions of the Empress and of a final junction of the Shuvalovs with Voronzov and his own brother [4] which induced him to change his tactics completely and urge Williams to bribe his enemies, and thus lessen the opposition to his attempts to carry the measures Britain required from the Russian court.[5] Although he thought it wise to try to disarm his enemies by means of the accommodatingly generous British ambassador, Bestuzhev was not yet seriously alarmed at the cabals against him. Throughout his tenure of office he had had to fight hard to maintain his hold upon the Empress, who, it appears, had a personal distaste for him, and was well aware of his intrigues and corruption,[6] but believed rightly that he was more competent to direct Russian foreign policy than any of his enemies.

[1] Bain, 142–6.
[2] *Cf.* Arneth, v, 43–4; Bain, 155–7.
[3] Catherine's *Memoirs*, 183–4.
[4] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 284.
[5] Williams to Holderness (separate and private), 21 September/2 October. Bestuzhev recommended a present of £500 to the Vice-Chancellor and approved heartily of the bribe already offered to and accepted by Olsuviev.
[6] Dickens to Holderness, 11/22 February, 1755, in Add. MSS. 32852, f. 572.

Voronzov, throughout Elizabeth's reign, was maintained in office, not merely because his wife was one of the Empress's cronies, but because he was an invaluable spy upon his colleague.

The conclusion of the convention, however, was a great advantage to Bestuzhev, since he, as Williams reported,

> is the declared father of this child [the convention] which is at once to feed both the wants and the vanity of the Empress; it has already enabled him to talk in a different tone to his Imperial mistress from what he has lately dared to do, and has given him a great superiority over the Vice Chancellor which no man in Europe knows how to make a better use of than himself.[1]

Williams, like every one else at the Russian court, was faced with the choice between the old and the young court, and did not take long to make up his mind. His rank placed him next to the Grand Duchess at supper, and they were soon on cordial and confidential terms,[2] which ripened into intimacy when Stanislas Poniatowski, whom Williams had brought to Petersburg to strengthen the bonds between the Russian court and the Czartoryski party in Poland, became Catherine's lover.[3] Between the oddly assorted couple there grew up a genuine affection as well as a political alliance. Catherine, amid the ignorant, illiterate, and grossly superstitious court of Petersburg, found in the elderly diplomat a kindred spirit, irreverent, sceptical, and endowed with a superficial culture[4] and a gift for 'witty' expression of a few trite ideas—in short, enlightened as 'enlightenment' was understood in the eighteenth-century courts. Political motives reinforced natural affinity. Catherine had indeed got over the worst pitfalls which surrounded her on her arrival at the Russian court in 1744, but she was well aware of the possibility that she and her husband might still be disinherited in favour of Ivan; and the greater the power of the Shuvalovs, who, after Catherine's reconciliation with the Great Chancellor, had become the deadly enemies of her husband and herself, the greater the danger. Catherine, as she confessed to Williams, and as subsequent events were to

[1] Williams to Holderness, 31 July/11 August.
[2] Herzen Memoir, 230.
[3] Poniatowski, 153 *et seq.*; Rulhière, i, 274.
[4] Williams's attainments as a classical scholar were, however, extolled by Voltaire (*Œuvres complètes*, Paris, 1827, vol. iii, p. 1181).

prove, would stop at nothing in order to place herself on the throne of the Tsars, and in the event of a disputed succession British support would be of considerable value. Meantime, Williams could be very useful to her, both by the control which he as Bestuzhev's paymaster exercised over her new ally, the Great Chancellor, and by procuring for her direct from the British Government ready money to supplement the allowances which she received from the Empress, and which were quite inadequate for a young woman with Catherine's expensive tastes.[1]

Catherine, therefore, set out to captivate the susceptible ambassador. Not content to exploit her personal charms, she adroitly penetrated Williams's armour by professing boundless hostility to Frederick of Prussia, whose conduct while he was at Berlin Williams could neither forget nor forgive. "She is," Williams reported, "not only convinced that [the King of Prussia] is the natural and formidable enemy to Russia, but I find she hates him personally."[2] Williams succumbed without hesitation. His personal vanity was flattered, and no ambassador could reject advances from Elizabeth's apparent successor, especially when the health of the Empress was so precarious.[3]

[1] Catherine's *Memoirs*, 94, gives information as to the amount of her debts.
[2] Williams to Holderness (separate and most secret), 21 September/2 October.
[3] Orders were sent to him on 18 November to ingratiate himself with "the apparent successors to the Russian throne."

CHAPTER XI

EUROPE: THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN TREATY AND THE DIPLOMATIC REVOLUTION (April 1755–May 1756)

Beginnings of the *rapprochement* between Britain and Prussia—Breach between Britain and Austria—Importance of the Russian treaty of subsidy for British plans—Views of the British and Hanoverian ministers as to the use to be made of it—Newcastle forestalls Parliamentary opposition to the treaty by bringing Fox into the Cabinet—Parliamentary debates on the treaty—British overtures to Prussia—Attitude of Frederick II—He attempts to mediate between Britain and France—He accepts the British overtures to preserve the peace of Germany—Signature of the Convention of Westminster—The British Government attempts to reconcile Austria and Prussia—Austria pushes on her negotiation with France—French indignation at Prussian desertion—Frederick's independent attitude towards France and gradual *rapprochement* with Britain—Austria and France conclude the first Treaty of Versailles—Its terms and their significance—Divergent views of Austria and France.

During the summer and autumn of 1755 the attitude of the British Government towards the Russian treaty of subsidy had changed completely. As the crescendo of offers sent to Petersburg showed, they were more eager than ever to have the treaty signed and ratified, but they proposed to employ it in a way entirely different from that contemplated in April 1755. The originator of the new policy was apparently Newcastle. When Keith reported Austria's 'flat' refusal [1] to send reinforcements to the Low Countries until some general plan of campaign was formed Newcastle realised more clearly than Holderness and his other colleagues that this was virtually Austria's last word.[2] "Holderness writes to Keith," Newcastle wrote, "to insist upon their sending 25,000 or 30,000 men into Flanders. He might as well whistle—they won't send a man till our treaty with Russia is upon the point of being made and a general plan formed." Just at this time, when Newcastle realised that Austrian assistance against France could be bought—if at all—only at a monopoly price, the King of Prussia took the first

[1] Holderness to Newcastle, 28 May, in Add. MSS. 32855, f. 236.
[2] Newcastle to Yorke (private), 30 May, in Add. MSS. 32855, f. 256.

step towards a *rapprochement* with George II by asking for an interview with him. George II was not yet ready to grant the request, but, in alarm at the Austrian refusal to send troops into the Netherlands,[1] he allowed his ministers to make a gracious reply and to arrange that a salute should be fired as the King of Prussia passed Hanover on his return from Amsterdam. This Prussian feeler suggested to Newcastle that if Austria continued to be recalcitrant some understanding might be reached with Prussia. Consequently, when Austria gave her definitive reply to Britain's appeal for help this possibility influenced the decision of the Cabinet.

The conditions on which Austria was willing to come to Britain's assistance [2] were indeed "very burdensome to England" [3]—so burdensome that Hardwicke believed that Kaunitz intended them to be refused. "The answer to the King," he wrote,[4] "is indeed very extraordinary. They will send 20,000 men into the Netherlands provided certain things are done which they know will never be done." He doubted, however, whether Austria was in earnest, and suspected that her real intention was to extort subsidies from Britain as the price of assistance.[5] Holderness, the minister in attendance at Hanover, regarded the Austrian answer as not entirely impracticable; but, acting on Newcastle's hints, he showed to the King

> the difficulty if not impossibility of bringing to bear the extensive scheme lately thrown out [by Kaunitz] and consequently the necessity of cultivating the least good disposition in the King of Prussia, and [his] representations [had] not been ill-received.[6]

The Cabinet meantime had decided that it would not, at the request of Austria, transform the colonial struggle with France into a general European war, but would concentrate

[1] "I never saw the King more uneasy than at this event." (Holderness to Newcastle, 28 May, in Add. MSS. 32855, f. 236.)

[2] The gist of the Austrian ultimatum with lengthy quotations is given in Coxe, *Austria*, iii, 357–9.

[3] Holderness to Newcastle, 29 June, in Add. MSS. 32856, f. 348.

[4] Hardwicke to Newcastle, 5 July, in Add. MSS. 32856, f. 484.

[5] Holderness shared this opinion: "England must bear the burden of the expense [of the Austrian scheme and the] House of Austria must in the end have a pecuniary assistance from thence." (Holderness to Newcastle, 29 June (second letter), in Add. MSS. 32856, f. 378.)

[6] Holderness to Newcastle, 9 July (second P.S., *entre nous*), in Add. MSS. 32856, f. 601.

on the maritime aspect of the struggle and limit its Continental activities to providing for the defence of Hanover by a system of subsidy treaties.[1]

The main reason for the British refusal to accept the Kaunitz plan was its expense, but the fact that Austria virtually demanded their assistance against Prussia in exchange for help against France exercised hardly less influence on their decision. When Keith, with the comment that the court of Vienna "have the King of Prussia always in their eye," reported that Kaunitz had remarked to him that the balance of power had been upset "by the rise of Prussia: Russia was necessary to restore it: he [Kaunitz] seemed even to think that this was but a palliatory remedy and that nothing would work a perfect cure but reducing things to their ancient state," [2] Newcastle commented that this was "a pretty remarkable expression";[3] and subsequently Holderness in a despatch to Williams [4] informed him that

> if the court of Vienna . . . did ever entertain hopes that His Majesty would ever have joined in so wild and extravagant a view as that of making the destruction of the King of Prussia's power the condition upon which the House of Austria would have afforded their assistance to the Maritime Powers against France it was high time they should be undeceived.[5]

The decision of the British Government to abandon the Continent was in complete accordance with popular opinion in England. "Sea war, no continent, no subsidy [was] almost the universal language." [6] The decision of the ministers to conform their action to public opinion had, however, been due not to popular clamour, but chiefly to the extent of the Austrian demands. The leading ministers still cherished the hope of a modification of the Austrian ultimatum which would enable them to reverse their decision. The conclusion of the Russian treaty was vital from this point of view. "We can do nothing

[1] Newcastle to Holderness, 11 July, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 1; Cabinet Minute, dated 30 July, in Add. MSS. 35870, f. 254.
[2] Keith to Newcastle (private), 22 May, in Add. MSS. 32855, f. 100.
[3] Newcastle to Holderness, 6 June, in Add. MSS. 32855, f. 353b.
[4] Holderness to Williams, 6 February, 1756.
[5] Cf. *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 328.
[6] Newcastle to Holderness (*entre nous*), 25 July, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 362b.

without the Dutch, the Dutch nothing without the Austrians, nor the Austrians anything without the Russians. When we are masters of the latter we may take the part we please." [1]

If, however, the rupture with Austria became definitive the Russian treaty was even more essential. It could be used as a threat to induce Prussia to refrain from attacking Hanover and was the only weapon which offered the least chance of success; while, if it failed to restrain Prussia and avert the Continental war, the prompt intervention of Russia was the only hope of a successful defence of Hanover against the combined forces of France and Prussia. In the hope that leisure would bring with it reflection, Newcastle decided to return no answer to the Austrian project and to concentrate on the alternative policy of negotiating with Prussia. His scheme is clearly outlined in a letter to Münchausen: [2]

> Le Roi de Prusse craint par dessus toutes choses la Russie et l'accomplissement de notre traité avec elle. Ce traité une fois fait ne peut on faire sentir au Roi de Prusse qu'en cas que Sa Majesté Prussienne ne prenne pas aucune part dans la guerre entre l'Angleterre et la France; et qu'elle ne permet pas que les états allemands du Roi fussent attaqués en conséquence de ces brouilleries: les trouppes que Sa Majesté est en droit de demander en vertue de son traité avec la Russie ne seront point requises: mais tout restera à cet égard sur le pied où il est à présent. On épargnera par là la dépense immense des trouppes russes si elles étoient à notre solde: et on procureroit (à ce que me semble) une sûreté la plus solide et la plus réelle pour les états allemands du Roi. . . .

Münchausen and Steinberg, George II's Hanoverian ministers, before they received this letter, had already written to Newcastle [3] suggesting vaguely that the only hope of saving Hanover was "disposer le Roi de Prusse à une activité en faveur de ces païs," and therefore warmly welcomed Newcastle's proposal,[4] which was equally approved by the leading members

[1] Robinson to Newcastle, 27 July (misplaced under June), in Add. MSS. 32856, f. 268.
[2] 25 July, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 348.
[3] 26 July, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 376.
[4] Münchausen to Newcastle, 2 August, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 514; Newcastle to Hardwicke, 15 August, in Add. MSS. 35415, f. 40b.

of the British Cabinet. Robinson's only doubt was whether, if Prussian inactivity was secured by the promise not to use Russian auxiliaries, Britain would have sufficient troops to defend Hanover against France.[1] Granville "approved so much that he said [at a Cabinet meeting] that if we could keep the King of Prussia quiet for one year only it would be worth everything to us."[2] Hardwicke approved also in principle, but pointed out practical difficulties:

> I am anxious about [the Russian] treaty in our present circumstances. I don't see how we can do without it or with it. When it is finished it will be made the foundation of further schemes on the Continent of which the whole expence will be thrown upon England. How this can be accepted I know not and yet if it should become necessary to make the requisition it will be thought a prodigious burden for ye defence of Hanover *merely*. I therefore extremely wish that some such scheme could take place as Your Grace has hinted to Münchausen and yet I fear for the practicability. The King of Prussia may lye by and yet France may send such a force that way as may strike so much terror that ye King may insist on ye requisition being made. On the other hand may not the Czarina be revolted or disgusted when she hears such a private bargain is struck up with the King of Prussia; for she certainly flatters herself with the expectation that the great subsidy of 500,000£ p.a. will come into her coffers.[3]

Holderness, whose opinions were of weight at this time, since he was the link between the King at Hanover and the Cabinet in London, still hankered on 30 July after the acceptance of the Austrian plan,[4] but, after receiving full details of Newcastle's plan, he gave a hint of it to Colloredo [5] and Flemming,[6] and added his voice to the approving chorus:

> . . . I quite agree in opinion with Your Grace that no better use could be made of the *Russian Treaty* in the *present circumstances*.

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[1] Robinson to Newcastle, 27 July, in Add. MSS. 32856, f. 268.

[2] Newcastle to Holderness (*entre nous*), 1 August, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 506. The addition of Prussia to the old system had long been the *idée fixe* of Granville's policy (W. Bentinck's note in *Archives*, ii, 281).

[3] Hardwicke to Newcastle, 28 July, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 396.

[4] Holderness to Newcastle (*entre nous*), 30 July, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 446.

[5] Beer, *Hist. Zeitschrift*, xxvii, 329–32.

[6] *Geheimnisse*, i, 239–42.

I say in the present circumstances because if there had been any possibility of engaging England in *great* and *wise* schemes for the Continent I could not have approved this step, but the moment *we* cannot make up our matters with *Vienna* the only thing left is to keep terms with *Prussia*. It seems of the utmost importance in order to bring this to bear that the secret of our coldness with Vienna should be strictly kept. I have therefore pressed the King to look more favourably upon *Colloredo*: if His Prussian Majesty thinks us still well with our *old friends* he must see the possibility of his having the two Empresses and Saxony upon his back at a time and will the more readily hear reason when he has much to fear and little to hope from a general crash. . . .[1]

Accordingly, on British initiative, a serious negotiation was opened at Hanover for an understanding with Prussia to localise the war by the exchange of a formal guarantee of each other's dominions in Germany.

While Holderness was carrying on this negotiation with Prussia Newcastle exerted himself to undermine in advance the Parliamentary opposition to the proposed subsidy treaty with Russia.[2] The choice lay between Pitt and Fox.[3] Newcastle, on bad terms with Fox, attempted at first to secure the support of Pitt by the promise of a place in the Cabinet,[4] but Pitt proved quite intractable in his opposition to the Russian treaty.[5] Fox was more accommodating,[6] and came into the Ministry as Secretary of State for the Southern Department,[7] in place of Sir T. Robinson, a professional diplomatist, who in his eighteen months' tenure of the Secretaryship had proved a competent bureaucrat, but had gained lasting notoriety owing to the feebleness of his powers as a speaker in the House of

[1] Holderness to Newcastle (*entre nous* (2)), 2 August, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 555.

[2] Walpole, *George II*, ii, 39–44. [3] Yorke, ii, 189–200.

[4] Hardwicke to Newcastle, 9 August, in Add. MSS. 32858, f. 74, printed in Yorke, ii, 230 ff.; Williams, *Pitt*, i, 265–6.

[5] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 3 September, in Add. MSS. 32858, f. 408, printed in Yorke, ii, 237 ff. The only argument which made any impression on him was that Russia would restrain Sweden from lending her men-of-war to France (Hardwicke to Newcastle, 15 September, in Add. MSS. 32859, f. 86).

[6] Walpole, *Letters*, iii, 351.

[7] See Newcastle to Lady Catherine Pelham, 26 September (in Add. MSS. 32859, f. 219), for an account of Newcastle's motives in bringing in Fox, and for his way of doing it.

Commons. Fox's prowess as a debater in the Commons gave the Government a support there which it badly needed, and made practically certain the passing of the Russian treaty of subsidy.[1]

Although despatched by Williams on 2 October, the treaty did not reach London until the 31st, as the messenger was delayed at Helvoetsluys by contrary winds. The treaty, being now entirely satisfactory to the British Government, was ratified by the King, and the documents required for the exchange of ratifications were despatched to Petersburg on 18 November. On 10 December the debate on the treaty took place in both Houses.[2] In the Lords the treaty was passed by 85 votes to 12; in the Commons, after a violent altercation between Pitt and the Government spokesmen, Hume Campbell and Fox, the treaty was referred to committee of supply by 318 votes to 126. The committee met on the 12th and, after a debate which lasted until 3 o'clock in the morning,[3] accepted the treaty by a majority of 289 to 121. The decision of the committee was reported to the House on the 15th, and the Russian treaty finally passed by a majority of 263 votes to 69. Throughout the debates the main objection of the Opposition, apart from the perennial taunts at Hanover, was that the Russian treaty, being manifestly directed against Prussia, was almost certain to provoke Frederick II to war; and that Britain therefore would be dragged into a Continental war when all her resources were required in the maritime and colonial war with France. This objection had already been well-nigh removed, but it was impossible for the Government at this stage to reveal the secret negotiations which they were conducting with Prussia, although Holderness hinted obscurely at what was going on. Their main defence was to declare that the treaty was purely defensive and would only be put in force in the event of an attack by some European Power upon the British Isles or Hanover.

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 326–7, 363–4.

[2] Reports by West and Stone of the debates, in Add. MSS. 32861, ff. 271 and 275; *cf.* H. Digby to Williams, 23 December, in Stowe MSS., 263, and also Walpole, *George II*, ii, 103–38.

[3] West's report to Newcastle in Add. MSS. 32861, f. 290.

Three days after the ratifications of the treaty had been despatched to Petersburg Michell, the Prussian *chargé d'affaires*, had called on Fox and asked for a copy of Britain's treaty with Russia "as a prelude and leading step to a better understanding with the King his master." [1] Frederick II, sceptical of Williams's success at Petersburg,[2] had not at first taken Holderness's overtures very seriously.[3] In the first place, he doubted their sincerity—not unreasonably in view of recent and still subsisting quarrels, and, in fact, Newcastle, when he first broached the scheme to his colleagues, spoke consistently of "*present* management for the King of Prussia." [4] The overtures were, however, too tempting to be put aside without mature deliberation, and the more Frederick considered them the more attractive they seemed.[5] Their attraction lay in the chance which they offered of preventing the Franco-British struggle from extending to Continental Europe—a danger constantly in Frederick's mind from the end of 1754.[6] After the War of the Austrian Succession Prussia needed time to recuperate, and was for the time being a satiated state. Frederick was fully occupied, not only in incorporating Silesia but in developing the administrative and military system of Frederick William I, which was gradually welding a miscellaneous collection of scattered estates into a centralised and despotic monarchy.

Thanks to his efficient espionage system,[7] Frederick had secured a copy of the Treaty of the Two Empresses,[8] and dis-

[1] Holderness to Newcastle, 21 November, in Add. MSS. 32861, f. 59. Michell in his despatch apparently represented that Holderness took the initiative and offered him a copy of the treaty, with assurances of its purely defensive character and of the desire of the British Government to co-operate with Prussia in preserving the peace of Germany, offering in exchange to guarantee Silesia once again and to settle the old quarrels about the Silesian loan and the Prussian ships (*Pol. Corr.*, xi, 418–9).

[2] Frederick II to Michell, 2 September (intercepted), in Add. MSS. 32858, f. 400.

[3] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 273.

[4] *E.g.*, Newcastle to Holderness (*entre nous*), 1 August, in Add. MSS. 32857, f. 506.

[5] *Cf.* analysis of Frederick's motives in Lodge, 83–6.

[6] *Pol. Corr.*, x, 485.

[7] Menzel, the Saxon chancery clerk, was by far the most valuable of these from April 1752 onwards (*Pol. Corr.*, ix, 84), but there were numerous others.

[8] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 328.

covered that one of its secret articles went beyond the bounds of a defensive alliance and was definitely directed against himself; subsequent discoveries confirmed his belief that Austria, with the connivance of Russia and Saxony, was merely waiting for a suitable opportunity to declare war upon him and renew the struggle for Silesia. Frederick was therefore as anxious to avert an Austro-Russian attack upon his dominions as his uncle George II was to preserve Hanover from attack by Prussia.[1] If the Franco-British struggle spread to the Continent Prussia would be faced with a choice of evils. If she supported France she would be open to attack on all sides —by the Russians on the east, the Austrians and Saxons on the south, the Hanoverians and probably other German troops subsidised by Britain on the west, while her coasts might be blockaded and bombarded by British and Russian squadrons in the Baltic. In this struggle Prussia would be fighting on behalf of an ally in a quarrel which did not concern her, and out of which even if she were successful she could gain practically nothing. Moreover, Frederick already appreciated the decadence of France as a military power which Rossbach revealed to the world; the influence of the Pompadour on French policy filled him with contempt;[2] and France's inactivity in the face of British insults and aggression confirmed his belief in the military weakness and political indecision of his ally.[3] "Never," he wrote,

> would Louis XIV have postponed making a decision in deference to the possible action of an English Parliament; on the contrary, the English Parliament was then obliged to make its decisions in consequence of the acts of Louis XIV.[4]

France, he believed, if war extended to the Continent, would probably involve him with the Anglo-Imperial coalition, and then abandon him to his fate, as he contended she had done in the Second Silesian War,[5] or at least give him inefficient and inadequate support. He was confirmed in this belief by the reply of Rouillé, the French Foreign Minister, to his

[1] Waddington, 444.
[2] *Pol. Corr.*, ix, 420.
[3] *Cf.* Tuttle, ii, 244 ; *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 240–1, 274–5, etc.
[4] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 375 (translated).
[5] *Ibid.*, 144, 232.

suggestion [1] that France should occupy Hanover if England extended the war to the Continent. Rouillé replied that if Britain's allies interfered in the war between Britain and France he would expect Prussia to make herself responsible for the attack on Hanover. Finally, Frederick had always resented the condescending attitude of the French Government towards him and would be glad to assert his equality in the alliance with France, provided this could be done with safety to the interests of Prussia. At this time he was particularly anxious to prove that he was not the 'slave' of France, since he resented the renewed attempts of France to include Saxony in the Franco-Prussian alliance in direct opposition to his declared wishes.

This alternative, then, was extremely risky, and offered little prospect of gain even if Prussia were successful. But the other alternative—to refuse to come to the assistance of France if attacked on the Continent—was even less attractive. Firstly, it would be a breach of treaty obligations, but this counted for little with Frederick. It would also mean in all probability the final rupture of the Franco-Prussian alliance, which had proved so useful to Prussia, but had several times already been strained almost to the breaking-point by Frederick's selfishness. The rupture of this alliance would undermine Prussia's position in the Empire, and would remove the one great obstacle which had hitherto prevented Austria and Russia from carrying out their hostile plans against her.

Whichever alternative Frederick chose ruin stared him in the face. Therefore he suddenly became a fanatic for peace,[2] and exerted himself to the utmost to preserve peace on the Continent. If this could be done he would not need to choose between these two dire alternatives. His first idea was that war might be averted by the submission of the disputes between Britain and France to the joint mediation of Austria and Prussia.[3] France would willingly have accepted this proposal,[4] but it was not at all to the taste of the British Government; [4] Frederick therefore

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 106–7, 143–4, 148–9.
[2] *Ibid.*, 256.
[3] *Ibid.*, 233.
[4] *Ibid.*, 281, 293, 387.

abandoned it,[1] and began to consider seriously the possibility of reaching an understanding with Britain to keep the war out of Germany.[2] As the autumn of 1755 wore on this possibility seemed more and more to offer Frederick a means of escape from his precarious position. He guessed [3] correctly that, while the directors of French policy wished to avoid Continental war, Austria had refused to support Britain. There seemed, therefore, at first glance no reason why Prussia also should not contribute her share to the localisation of the conflict, and by reassuring Britain as to her designs on Hanover make practically certain the preservation of Continental peace and extricate herself from a dangerous situation.

The renewed British overtures to Prussia after the despatch of the British ratifications of the Anglo-Russian treaty were exactly on the lines which Frederick desired. Britain and Prussia had now a common interest—the preservation of the peace of Germany. The weak conduct of the French Government, Frederick argued,[4] forced its allies to provide for their own security as best they could. A mutual guarantee of their territories by Britain and Prussia, while it would thwart the schemes of the imperial courts and lengthen the faces of the Austrian and Russian ministers,[5] of whose military preparations he was already informed,[6] and thus give Prussia security for the time being at least,[7] need not involve the breach of the Franco-Prussian alliance, since Frederick was now informed on good authority that France did not propose to extend the colonial and maritime struggle to the Continent. Knyphausen, Frederick's minister at Versailles, wrote:

> Le penchant qu'on a ici pour une guerre maritime paraît augmenter de jour en jour. Ce parti est . . . celui qui est le plus conforme aux désirs de la maîtresse, qui craint qu'une guerre de terre n'éloigne le Roi de sa personne. . . .[8]

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[1] He proposed after the Convention of Westminster to mediate alone between Britain and France (*Pol. Corr.*, xii, 36, 38), and the hope of success in this was possibly a subsidiary inducement to conclude the convention.

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 287, 289, 303, etc.

[3] *Ibid.*, 377.

[4] *Ibid.*, 426, 430; xii, 62.

[5] *Ibid.*, xi, 427, 457.

[6] *Ibid.*, 434, 452.

[7] *Ibid.*, 453.

[8] *Ibid.*, 267–8; *cf.* xii, 371.

Bunge, the Swedish minister at Versailles, was even more emphatic:[1]

> . . . the King of France determined from the beginning to have a sea war only for the following reasons: (1) however successful diversions in the Netherlands have been they have not hindered England from pursuing her plans (2) land and sea war at once are impracticable without exhausting the kingdom of men and money and sea war is already inevitable (3) France required her whole strength by sea to thwart the aggressive views of England in the colonies (4) once a land war was begun it would by degrees spread further and further and France would no longer have it in her power to restore peace without being brought under the necessity of going through with an expensive war in order to fulfil engagements contracted in the meantime. To which must be added that as all treaties France has with other courts are only defensive she might easily be abandoned by her allies and thus left to bear the whole load of the war alone.[2]

The French Government believed that Britain desired a Continental war, the burden of which apart from subsidies would fall chiefly on her allies, since a land war would hamper and distract the energies of France from the maritime struggle. They believed also that Britain wished to arrange matters so that the appearance of aggression would fall upon France and enable her to call upon her allies for assistance in a defensive war.[3] Common sense, therefore, dictated that France should disappoint the views of her enemy by abstaining from Continental war.

Newcastle was delighted to find from intercepted correspondence that France had no immediate intention of attacking Hanover. Bunge's letter in particular, since it was from "the most favoured minister and the most favourite court that is now connected with France and consequently one which the court of France would not deceive,"[4] convinced him of Frederick's sincerity and encouraged him to conclude the Convention of Westminster.[4] The coldness between Austria and Britain, on

[1] Bunge to Höpken, 8 December (intercepted), in Add. MSS. 32861, f. 218.

[2] These letters and others cited by Waddington (*Louis XV*, 241–9) show that, although the French Government was in its habitual state of irresolution, Knyphausen had on the whole correctly gauged the attitude of the dominant section.

[3] Waddington, 445–8.

[4] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 28 December, in Add. MSS. 32861, f. 487.

the other hand, gradually became known,[1] and helped to convince Frederick that Britain was in earnest.[2] After reassuring himself on this point he waited only until he was certain that Britain had actually concluded her subsidy treaty with Russia,[3] and then intimated to the British Government his readiness to conclude a convention on the basis already indicated by Holderness. Britain promptly submitted a draft treaty, which Frederick accepted with one important alteration suggested by Podewils—the exclusion of the Low Countries from the area the neutrality of which was guaranteed by the convention. Frederick had already pointed out[4] how easy it would be for France to conquer the Netherlands in a single campaign, and he therefore left France free to operate there, if, contrary to his and her own expectations, she subsequently desired a land war as well as a sea war. The convention, thus modified, was signed at Whitehall on 16 January, 1756.[5] It was purely an *ad hoc* agreement to preserve the neutrality of Germany, but soon produced effects on the delicate diplomatic balance which were entirely unexpected by the two contracting parties. Frederick had always exaggerated Russia's dependence on Britain[6] and France's dependence on himself, while both to British and Prussian diplomatists the reconciliation of Austria and France seemed an impossibility.

In Newcastle's view the Convention of Westminster was the first step towards the addition of Prussia to the Anglo-Imperial alliance, as he explained in a letter[7] to W. Bentinck, who had protested that he "did not understand [n]or conceive to be possible" the "taking in the King of Prussia at the same time with Russia,"[8] and still more, by implication, with Austria. "Hitherto," Newcastle replied,

> the King of Prussia acts with great fairness. . . . Surely we should make the best use of it we can not to destroy the old system but to

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[1] Holderness to Newcastle (*entre nous*), 17 August, in Add. MSS. 32858, f. 191; *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 209, 236, etc.
[2] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 351, 398.
[3] *Ibid.*, 387; Waddington, *Louis XV*, 154.
[4] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 260.
[5] I have adopted the name Convention of Westminster, by which the treaty is best known. (Text in Wenck, iii, 84 ff., and Schäfer, i, 582–4.)
[6] *Pol. Corr.*, vi, 118, 123.
[7] Newcastle to W. Bentinck, 10 February, 1756, in Add. MSS. 32862, f. 433.
[8] W. Bentinck to Newcastle, 31 October, 1755, in Add. MSS. 32860, f. 256.

strengthen and maintain it in opposition to its natural enemy France. . . . If now [the court of Vienna] will really consult their own interests and not their passions and their *hauteur* our Treaty with Prussia may be a most happy thing to them.

The arguments with which Newcastle sought to combat the passions and *hauteur* of the court of Vienna are set forth at length in Holderness's official despatches to Vienna [1] and Petersburg: [2]

The Court of Vienna having positively declared that unless they were secured from the power of His Prussian Majesty in Germany they could never think of diminishing the number of their troops actually in those parts of their dominions that lay exposed to the attack of that formidable power. In what manner then could this be brought about? Only by one or other of the following methods, *vizt* by the joint forces of the two Empresses maintained as they must have been by the money of England; or by an amicable proceeding and by finding means to induce the King of Prussia to see his true and lasting interests and showing him that he might rest in secure and quiet possession of his acquisitions by contracting new engagements with or under the influence of Great Britain. Which of the two of these methods was the most eligible for the general good of the common cause it is easy to determine. . . . Yet in order to be provided against all events and to be enabled to defeat such schemes as the King of Prussia might possibly have entered into in conjunction with France, the King took those measures with the Court of Russia which are now publicly known to the whole world but which were never meant to be put into execution offensively unless necessity should oblige the King to it. And if which is probable the apprehensions of the consequences of this treaty have contributed to influence His Prussian Majesty's present resolution the continuance and existence of that treaty is by the same way of reasoning a pledge for the good faith with which His Prussian Majesty will keep his new engagements with the King and will be a sure and solid basis for any steps that may be taken by the King's allies towards Prussia. It is not difficult to conceive that the Court of Vienna might have had other hopes from the Russian Treaty but had any other use been made of it it would no longer have been a pacifick or preventitive measure but on the contrary have immediately drawn on a most dangerous war which if successful might indeed have

[1] Holderness to Keith, 23 March, S.P.F., Germany (Empire).
[2] Holderness to Williams, 6 February.

been beneficial to the House of Austria but could never have produced any solid advantage to His Majesty or at least not such as could have been in any ways adequate to the immense expence and hazard of such an undertaking. And so as to jealousies the Court of Vienna may conceive that there will now be a predilection for the Prussian alliance in preference to that with the House of Austria and that this new Treaty may have taken place as much from pique and resentment as from other motives. That Court has been positively assured that it was far from being His Majesty's intention to alter or diminish his attachment to his antient and natural allies but that by the Court of Vienna's own confession the defection of the House of Brandenburg from the antient system had so totally altered the face of affairs in Europe that the House of Austria found themselves unable to take measures for the security of the distant parts of her dominions the preservation of which immediately concerned the Maritime Powers unless she could obtain from them a previous security against the King of Prussia which would have been both more costly and perhaps more precarious than the utmost efforts which have at other times been made in a joint and well-connected opposition to France. But a predilection or preference is widely different from the view of the present alliance with Prussia, which is undertaken upon the same principle that forced the King in former times to advise the House of Austria (disagreeable as that counsel was) to yield what they could not defend and without which concession the whole had been in the most imminent danger. The same motive that convinced the Court of Vienna of the necessity of complying with what was then proposed ought still more strongly to operate in the present circumstances and deter them from attempting forcibly and unjustly to regain possession of a territory which by repeated treaties has been confirmed to a prince whose power they respect to such a degree as scarce to venture to vindicate their own rights against France or comply with their former engagements with those powers to whom they owe more than it is necessary to mention. The present treaty with the King of Prussia puts them in a possibility of repairing that breach in the system of Europe which the union between France and Prussia had so fatally made; and they may now without running any risk of being attacked in Germany detach some considerable reinforcements into the Low Countries as has been fully explained to them but if they will still look upon that Prince as their irreconcilable enemy and act towards him as such, they cannot wonder that His Majesty should decline joining

in views which must carry ruin and inevitable destruction with them.

Such arguments as these were more calculated to offend than to conciliate the Austrian court. That two electors should, without previous consultation with the Emperor, take it upon themselves to arrange for the peace of the Empire was in itself regarded as an insult by the haughty court of Vienna.[1] Moreover, the arguments of the British Government showed a complete misunderstanding of the attitude and aims of Austria.

Kaunitz, receiving no reply to his conditional acceptance of British demands,[2] had in August 1755 opened negotiations [3] with France, but these negotiations had made little progress, and in January 1756 were practically at a deadlock [4] owing to France's refusal to renounce her alliance with Prussia. When the Convention of Westminster was known at Versailles it provoked an outburst of indignation, which modified considerably the attitude of the French Government towards Kaunitz's overtures. It was in vain that Frederick contended that he had concluded the convention in the interests of France, since it would prevent the Russian auxiliaries and a large part of the Austrian armies from acting against her,[5] or at least crushing her allies in the Empire. He pointed out also that he had carefully refrained from hampering French action in the Netherlands—the obvious field on which France could obtain compensation for defeat in the maritime and colonial struggle.[6]

The key to France's indignation at the Convention of Westminster is to be found in a conversation between Rouillé and Knyphausen a few days before news of the convention arrived at Versailles. Rouillé stated that at present France had no intention of acting in Germany, and agreed that an attack on Hanover would be a very difficult operation, although he added that failure at sea might render necessary some military operations

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 325.

[2] "Ever since the end of June last I have had no more to do in business with the ministers of this court than with the officers of the Seraglio at Constantinople." (Keith to Williams, 29 November, in Add. MSS. 35492, f. 83.)

[3] Arneth, iv, 383–97 ; Broglie, *L'Alliance autrichienne*, 172–87.

[4] Waddington, *Louis XV*, 308.

[5] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 8–9, 49–50 ; *cf.* Luynes, xiv, 401 ; Argenson, ix, 181.

[6] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 455.

in Germany, and that it would be extremely humiliating for France to have her hands tied in this matter by conventions between Britain and the princes of Germany. The conclusion drawn from this conversation by Knyphausen was that France, if properly approached, would consent to stipulations for the neutrality of the Empire.[1] France's objections were to the method of Frederick's conclusion of the convention without consultation with her,[2] rather than to the terms of the convention.[2]

Although French ministers were careful to conceal their indignation [3]—except, very foolishly, from Austria—the convention appeared equivalent in the eyes of Europe to the base desertion of France by her one important ally. The Franco-Prussian alliance was about to expire,[4] and the French Government had announced that the Duc de Nivernois, an envoy of exalted rank specially selected as a compliment to Frederick,[5] would go to Berlin to discuss the renewal of the treaty of alliance.[5] Nivernois arrived at Berlin just in time to receive from Frederick the draft of the Convention of Westminster, accompanied by the information that it was in all probability already signed; and he was thus placed in a ludicrous position which offended the pride of France.[6] Moreover, Rouillé argued that Prussia had no legal right to make the convention while Britain was waging an offensive war upon France; since, even if the treaty of 1741 was on the point of expiry, the tripartite treaty of defensive alliance of 1747 between France, Prussia, and Sweden was still in force, while the secrecy with which the convention had been concluded led him to suspect the existence of secret articles attached to the convention.[7]

Naturally, therefore, in order to preserve the dignity of France, the French ministers after considerable hesitation [8] quietly dropped the negotiation [9] for the renewal of the treaty of

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 71, 94–5.
[2] *Ibid.*, 105–6, 116; Lodge, 85–6.
[3] Bunge to Höpken (intercepted), 31 January, in Add. MSS. 32862, f. 299; cf. *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 117–9.
[4] *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 170, etc.
[5] Tuttle, ii, 252–3. Full details of Nivernois's mission in Lucien Perey, *Un Petit-neveu de Mazarin.*
[6] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 94, 107. [7] *Ibid.*, 116, 159, 161.
[8] See Valori's instructions in Waddington, 472–4; *cf.* Valori, i, 39–40.
[9] *Cf.* Bernis' remarks to Starhemberg, cited in Waddington, *Louis XV*, 315.

1741,[1] on the ground that the triple alliance of 1747 remained in force.[2] That the negotiation was not ostentatiously broken off was a tribute to the strength, even after the Convention of Westminster, of the Prussian party at Versailles, headed by Argenson, Belleisle,[3] and, curiously enough, Nivernois,[4] the ambassador whom Frederick was accused of insulting! Frederick, even after he saw that his convention had seriously impaired his intimate relations with France, was too proud to disarm French resentment by taking up a submissive and apologetic attitude. He adopted instead a defiant tone, and argued that (1) he was legally entitled to do what he had done, (2) he had made the convention in the interests of France, thus implying that he stood at least on equal terms with his ally in the alliance, and (3) if France did not like the convention and broke off her alliance with him he would have to avoid isolation by transforming the *entente* with Britain into an alliance.[5] Further, he insisted upon what must have been a sore point with the French Government, that while he had tried according to his lights to help France, their other allies, and particularly Spain, had shown no disposition whatever to come to France's assistance.

Kaunitz was fully informed of the dissatisfaction of France with her Prussian ally, and was encouraged to reject the British attempts to win his approval of the Convention of Westminster. He argued that to Austria the promise of Prussian neutrality was a snare and a delusion, since as soon as Austria had moved part of her troops into the Netherlands Frederick would throw off the mask and attack Bohemia. If this fear was real and not assumed it was far outweighed in Kaunitz's mind by advantages of which he was careful to say nothing to Britain. Privately he declared that the convention was a decisive event for the salvation of Austria,[6] since it would greatly facilitate the creation of the anti-Prussian coalition for which he had worked since 1749. He sent on the British Note explaining the Convention of Westminster to Russia, with the comment that Britain was clearly useless as an ally against Prussia,[7] in order to alienate Russia from Britain and

[1] In April Valori, at Berlin, suggested the renewal of this treaty, probably without orders from his Government. The proposal was shelved by Frederick (*Pol. Corr.*, xii, 259–60).

[2] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 161–2. [3] *Ibid.*, 119. [4] *Ibid.*, 145–6.

[5] *Ibid.*, 56–7. [6] Arneth, iv, 419. [7] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 382.

provide additional justification for his *rapprochement* with France. At the French court the Austrian minister, Starhemberg, worked zealously to rouse the anger of the French Government still further at the Convention of Westminster, and to win the active support of France for the anti-Prussian coalition. He failed, however, in this object, and during the illness of Bernis, the *protégé* of the Pompadour and leader of the Austrian party, it seemed not unlikely that the Austro-French negotiation would break down completely;[1] ultimately, thanks to the desire of the French Government, and particularly of Louis XV, to avenge the humiliation which they believed had been inflicted on France by the Convention of Westminster, and to the Austrian threat that if France entirely rejected her overtures she would join with the enemies of France,[2] the first Treaty of Versailles was signed on 1 May, 1756.[3]

This treaty consisted of two distinct conventions. The first was closely modelled on the Convention of Westminster. Austria promised to remain neutral in the Franco-British war, while France agreed to refrain from attacking any of the Empress-Queen's dominions. The second instrument went further than the Convention of Westminster, since it was a formal treaty of defensive alliance, by which if one of the contracting parties were attacked in its European possessions the other would send to its assistance a corps of 24,000 men. From the *casus fœderis* of this second convention the Franco-British war was expressly excepted. Five secret articles were attached to this treaty, three of which are of importance.[4] Article I provided that the *casus fœderis* would arise for Austria if one of Britain's allies attacked France, even as an auxiliary, presumably referring to Prussian assistance to Britain under the terms of the Convention of Westminster to resist a French attack on Hanover.[5] By the third article, in order to render permanent the good understanding between them, France and Austria agreed to continue negotiations for the completion of the work of the congress of Aix-la-Chapelle and to settle finally all territorial and other disputes which were dangerous to the peace of Europe and in particular

[1] Waddington, *Louis XV*, 322.
[2] Bernis, i, 264; Broglie, *L'Alliance autrichienne*, 338–42, 368–9.
[3] Text (but without the secret articles) in Wenck, iii, 139–47.
[4] Text in Schäfer, i, 584–5.
[5] Tuttle, ii, 270 n.

to the tranquillity of Italy. The fourth secret article placed difficulties in the way of the renewal of the Franco-Prussian alliance, since each party bound itself neither to make nor to renew any treaties without the consent of the other.

None of these articles, however, supports the contention that France had been won over to connive at an attack by the imperial courts upon Prussia. Doubtless France, according to Article I, would have welcomed Austrian assistance had she been compelled at some future date by failure at sea to attack Hanover and had Frederick assisted Britain; but this has no bearing on a proposed attack by Austria, Russia, and France upon Prussia. The terms of Article III provide positive proof of divergence between Austria and France, since the main feature of the Treaty of Aix, confirmed by the article, had been the European recognition of the incorporation of Silesia in Prussia, and the main territorial dispute which endangered European peace was the desire of Austria to recover Silesia. The two parts of this clause were, therefore, inconsistent with each other. Probably for France the real point of the third article was the reference to Italy which implied some kind of establishment in the Netherlands for Don Philip, the husband of Louis XV's favourite daughter.

Whatever differences of opinion there may be as to the ultimate significance of the terms of the first Treaty of Versailles, there can be no doubt that for the time being it registered the failure of Kaunitz to secure the active participation of France in the anti-Prussian coalition. More than this, the Treaty of Versailles was based on a misunderstanding between the contracting parties. Louis XV, the Pompadour, and the leading French ministers all regarded it as complete in itself, and as securing the peace of Europe so far as France was concerned, although they were willing to consider Austria's offers for French neutrality in a war between Prussia and the two imperial courts, and, had these offers been high enough, they might very probably have accepted them. To Kaunitz, on the other hand, the first Treaty of Versailles was a mere milestone on the road to war. It was valuable to him chiefly because it registered the breach of the Franco-Prussian alliance, and assured to Austria the support of France as an auxiliary if Prussia attacked Austria. From this to the promise of French neutrality if Austria attacked Prussia did

not seem a great step to Kaunitz, since a diplomatist of his ability and caution need never fight an 'offensive' war, and Kaunitz therefore was not prepared to pay much for what he regarded as a thing of little value. What he needed and intended to get was the promise of the active participation of France, by paying subsidies and sending auxiliaries, in the projected attack upon Prussia. That this manifest divergence of ideas did not prove fatal to the Austro-French alliance was due rather to the folly of Kaunitz's antagonist, Frederick of Prussia, than to his own diplomatic ability, but it is to the credit of the Austrian negotiators that at the moment the first Treaty of Versailles was signed they had accurately estimated the King of Prussia's character and foresaw the probability of his mistakes. "We will succeed," Starhemberg wrote, "sooner or later in our great scheme and perhaps the King of Prussia himself will be our most effective helper." [1]

[1] Cited in Broglie, *L'Alliance autrichienne*, 361. *Cf.* the conversation of Kaunitz with Flemming in *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 152.

CHAPTER XII

PETERSBURG: RUSSIA'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE DIPLOMATIC REVOLUTION (October 1755–August 1756)

Hostility of the Russian court to Prussia—Beginnings of the *rapprochement* between France and Russia—Delays in the exchange of the ratifications of the convention of 30 September at Petersburg —Underlying causes of this delay—Bestuzhev extorts the consent of the Empress—The *déclaration secrétissime*—Ambiguity of the convention—Divergent interpretations of Britain and Russia—Reception of the Convention of Westminster at Petersburg—Bestuzhev remains loyal to Britain—His motives—Attitude of the Shuvalovs and the Vice-Chancellor—Anger of the Empress—The anti-Prussian resolutions of the state councils of March—Austrian overtures to Russia for an attack on Prussia—Britain demands the suppression of the *déclaration secrétissime*—Second visit of the French agent Douglas to Petersburg—Bektyeev's mission to France—Partial success of Douglas's negotiation—Newcastle's plans to recover Russia—Holderness refuses to receive the *déclaration secrétissime*, but offers to open a fresh negotiation for Russian assistance against France—Decline of Bestuzhev's power—Attitude of Kaunitz to the Russian reply to his overtures—The divergence between France and Austria and the unreliability of Russia compel him to postpone acceptance of the Russian offers and to moderate the anti-Prussian zeal of the Russian Government—Cessation of Russia's military and naval preparations—Russian dissatisfaction with the first Treaty of Versailles—Revival of the Great Chancellor's influence—His plan of operations—Danger to Franco-Russian *rapprochement* from civil strife in Sweden—Newcastle summons Russia to choose between Britain and Austria—Weakness of and division of opinion in the Russian Government—Indolence and irresolution of the Empress—Political influence of the young court —The Grand Duchess acts as a British agent and keeps the peace between Bestuzhev and Williams for the time being—Williams seeks to reconcile Russia and Prussia and warns Frederick not to take the offensive.

. . . *La marche des événements en Russie, pleine de contradictions et d'imprévu, était une véritable énigme pour les cabinets de l'Europe. Les décisions les plus importantes dépendaient de tant de facteurs d'un poids si variable, qu'il était difficile d'en démêler les motifs et encore plus d'en prévoir les suites. L'état de santé de la souveraine, ses fantaisies, les intrigues d'anti-chambre ou d'alcôve, la vénalité bien connue des fonctionnaires les plus haut placés, les intérêts privés de toute sorte et de tout ordre, étaient autant de considérations dont il fallait tenir compte, autant de causes qui agissaient sur la boussole politique de la cour de Pétersbourg, et qui en faisaient constamment changer la direction.*

R. Waddington, *Louis XV et le Renversement des Alliances*, pp. 507–8

Between the signing of the subsidy treaty and the arrival of the British ratifications two important events occurred at Peters-

burg. In October a series of Councils were held at which the Empress and the Grand Duke were present.[1] The Councils took as the basis of their proceedings the advice given to the Empress by the Senate of 14 May, 1753—that Russia should oppose further increase of Prussian power and take the first opportunity to reduce Prussia to impotence. After prolonged discussion it was unanimously decided in principle to take the first opportunity to reduce the over-great power of Prussia; and, to render Russian intervention rapid and decisive, elaborate plans of campaign were drawn up and arrangements made to establish magazines for provisioning an army of 80,000 men near the Prussian frontier.[2]

The other event was the arrival of a certain M. Douglas, who travelled ostensibly for the sake of his health and claimed to be a relation of the Earl of Morton. He was, in fact, a Jacobite exile and an agent of the French Government, and the object of his visit to Petersburg was to explore the possibilities of the restoration of normal relations between France and Russia.[3] With an effrontery which compels admiration he called on Williams [4] and asked to be presented at court. Williams, however, was on his guard, civilly refused the request, and prevented Douglas from being presented to the Empress by the Swedish minister to whom he had introductions from Paris. Williams had his visitor well watched during the remainder of his short stay at Petersburg, and warned the Great Chancellor against him, but could not prevent Douglas from forming a *liaison* with the Vice-Chancellor[5] which was soon to bear fruit.

On 11 December the British ratifications arrived at Petersburg,[6] and Williams at once informed the Great Chancellor that he was ready to exchange ratifications. At first it seemed that there would be no delay—all that was required to complete the transaction was the signature of the Empress. Curiously enough the Empress suffered a series of mishaps, all of which—still more

[1] Williams to Holderness, 7, 11, 18 October.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 25 October; *Pol. Corr.*, xi, 430–1, 439–40; xii, 220.
[3] Interrupted since 1748 (Rambaud, ii, 15).
[4] Williams to Holderness, 7 October, 2 December; letter from Douglas, in A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 87.
[5] A.E. Russie, Mémoires et documents, v, f. 172; Poniatowski, 149.
[6] Williams to Holderness, 12 December.

curiously—affected her right hand and prevented her from signing the necessary documents. A few days before the arrival of ratifications she had fallen downstairs and bruised her right shoulder.[1] Then she "catched a violent rheumatism which is very unluckily fallen into her right arm."[2] A few days later, while the Empress was in the grand ducal nursery, the pole by which the cradle was suspended fell down and would have hit the Empress on the head, had she not, with great presence of mind, parried the blow with her right arm![3]

When on 31 December Williams was summoned to a conference with the Chancellors he discovered that it was not to exchange ratifications, but to receive a paper.[4] The Empress wished to know what Britain would do if the King of Prussia took part in the Franco-British war by attacking one of Britain's allies. What forces did Britain have to assist the ally who was attacked? Would Britain then be prepared to attack the King of Prussia in his own territories? and with what forces? Similar questions were addressed to the Austrian ambassador, Esterhazy, on the same day. Williams brusquely refused to enter into any of these questions until after the exchange of ratifications, although he indicated that in principle he found no serious objection to the Russian Note.[5]

These inquiries and the holding of the Privy Council show clearly that the Empress, who had been 'jockeyed' by Bestuzhev into acceptance of the subsidy treaty of 30 September, had not even yet decided to conclude the convention and wished to have assurances of British support against Prussia. She was not satisfied with the conditions on which the subsidy was promised by the treaty of 30 September, and the French party at court, animated by Douglas's mission, short and apparently unsuccessful as it had been, eagerly attacked the treaty. It was, they said, dishonourable to the Empress to sell her troops for a subsidy

[1] Williams to Holderness, 11 November, 30 December.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 27 December.
[3] Williams to Holderness, 30 December: "Though yesterday was her birthday her subjects had not the honour of kissing her hand as usual since even that must have given Her Imperial Majesty some pain."
[4] Appended to Williams's despatch to Holderness of 19 February (Paper No. $\frac{1}{2}$1).
[5] Solovev, xxiii, 308.

like a German princeling. They played on her resentment of the manner in which the Maritime Powers had treated the Russian auxiliaries in 1748 and had failed to secure Russia's representation at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle.[1] They aroused the Empress's *amour-propre* by pointing out that the treaty had been printed in the Dutch Gazettes before she had given it her august ratification.[2] They pointed out that the terms of the treaty of subsidy did not specifically limit the employment of Russian troops to a diversion against Prussia. Above all, they argued, was it not foolish, just when Douglas's mission proved the good disposition of France towards Russia, to involve herself in British hostility to France? This argument had great weight with the Empress, who had always been anxious to establish good relations with France.

Even the Great Chancellor wished to learn how the treaty had been received by the English Parliament before ratifying it,[3] and was dissatisfied that the additional £100,000 had not been granted, nor the first instalment of subsidy remitted to Petersburg.[4] It was apparently during the discussions on these points between Bestuzhev and Williams, of which Williams says nothing in his despatches, that the first open divergence between them occurred. Williams, according to Funcke, tried to get over the difficulties by assuring Bestuzhev that his friend Fox would soon be at the head of the British Government, and everything would then be put right. The falseness of Williams's prophecies awakened the lasting distrust of the Great Chancellor.[5] Even after these difficulties had been overcome the Russian ratification of the treaty was delayed from week to week owing to the intrigues of the French party and the notorious aversion of the Empress to business. When Williams's patience was exhausted the Great Chancellor had one of his convenient illnesses,[6] and employed his leisure in drawing up a memorandum[7] for the Empress, in which he boldly denounced the intrigues of his enemies, which had delayed the ratification of the convention, and threatened resignation if the Empress did not soon ratify it. He appealed partly to Elizabeth's vanity,

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 262.
[2] *Ibid.*, 172.
[3] *Ibid.*, xi, 431.
[4] *Ibid.*, xii, 66–8.
[5] *Ibid.*, 85–7.
[6] Williams to Holderness, 20 January.
[7] Extracts in Martens, ix, 186–8; cf. *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 151.

exaggerating the importance which Russia had gained among the Powers, thanks to the Empress and her Great Chancellor, but chiefly to her hatred of Frederick of Prussia.[1] To declare the convention null and void would cause an open breach between Britain and Russia, which would at the very least enable the enemies of Russia to deprive her of her influence in the general affairs of Europe. Finally, Bestuzhev jeered at his colleagues, who in the Privy Council and Senate clamoured for the humiliation of the King of Prussia and yet opposed the giving of assistance to the King of Great Britain, the bitter enemy of Frederick II.

Once again Bestuzhev had his way—the Empress ordered the two chancellors to proceed immediately to the exchange of ratifications. She insisted, however,[2] that the ambiguity of the convention must be removed by the addition of a secret declaration that the Russian troops would not be sent to the Rhine, Hanover, or the Low Countries, but solely employed in a diversion against Prussia. Accordingly, when ratifications were exchanged on 12 February, Williams was forced to accept a *déclaration secrétissime*,[3] which explained that the diversion provided for in the treaty would only be made in case of a Prussian attack upon his Britannic Majesty, or one of his allies. This, the declaration contended, was the manifest intention of the treaty itself. Article VII in particular stated that Russia, being particularly interested in preserving the tranquillity of the North, and the *status quo* in her neighbourhood, and considering also the close proximity of the country where the diversion must in all probability be made, and the ability of her troops to forage for themselves in the enemy's country, undertakes the sole charge of supplying with munitions, provisions, etc., the troops which are to make the diversion. Further, although Britain bound herself to obtain, if necessary, free passage through Poland for the Russian troops, no arrangements were made in the treaty for securing a passage for the

[1] This he actually stimulated by private arrangements that the Tsaritsa's ministers should send her false intelligence of the aggressive designs of Prussia. (*Pol. Corr.*, xi, 261, based on Funcke's despatches.)

[2] Martens, ix, 188; Williams to Holderness, 19 February.

[3] Appended to Williams's despatch of 19 February (Paper No. 2), and printed (with verbal differences) in Martens, ix, 201–3. Williams apparently failed to appreciate the full significance of this document. (Williams to Newcastle (private), 19 February, in Add. MSS. 32863, f. 25.)

Russian troops through the Empire as had been done in 1747, and certainly ought to have been done if Russian troops were to go to Hanover or the Netherlands. Finally, the clauses providing for sea transport of 10,000 men in Russian galleys and for the despatch of a British squadron to the Baltic strengthened still further the Russian case. The British Government at first made no attempt to answer it, but simply appealed to Bestuzhev to get the declaration suppressed.[1] When this failed they had no difficulty in making out a good case for their interpretation of the treaty. They pointed out[2] that the text of the treaty expressly and repeatedly stated that it was an extension of the general treaty of defensive alliance of 1742. This implied that the *casus fœderis* would arise if any Power whatsoever attacked the European possessions of Great Britain or (Article V) the electorate of Hanover, if attacked in consequence of a British quarrel.

The greatest share of blame for this unsatisfactory and dangerous ambiguity of the convention must rest on Holderness, although Newcastle and Williams share the responsibility. The negotiation of the treaty had been set on foot solely in view of a possible Prussian attack on Hanover. When this original object had been overshadowed by the danger of an attack from France the text of the various articles ought to have been carefully revised. Still more, when the British Government in the summer of 1755 changed completely the use it intended to make of the convention, ought it to have considered the applicability of the old clauses to the new conditions. No such revision was, in fact, undertaken, and the treaty therefore bore unmistakable impress of its original motive. Holderness, indeed, although well aware of the use intended to be made of the treaty by Newcastle, made matters still worse by sending to Petersburg the second secret and separate article,[3] which, although the official British interpretation made it inoperative until after the actual outbreak of war,[4] was interpreted at

[1] Holderness to Williams, 30 March.
[2] Holderness to Williams, 25 June.
[3] Martens, ix, 209. Waddington, *Louis XV*, 153, 223, gives a wrong idea of its contents by quoting only its second half.
[4] See "General State of the Negotiation with the Court of Russia, etc.," in S.P.F., Russia, 61 *ad fin.* *Cf.* Holderness to Williams, 25 June.

Petersburg as debarring Britain from negotiating, without the full concurrence of Russia, with "the common enemy," a phrase which, the Russian Government said, could only mean Prussia, especially as in the negotiation of the treaty it had frequently been stated in official communications to the British Government that the objective of the Russian auxiliary corps would be to attack the King of Prussia.[1] The contention of the British Government on this point is, however, probably correct, since, as Holderness wrote subsequently to Williams,[2]

> there was no war in which Her Imperial Majesty had taken any share, consequently no common enemy; no peace to be made, nor any reason upon earth to be given why His Majesty should not make such treaties as he thought proper with any prince equally in amity with the King and the Empress of Russia.

The root of the trouble between Britain and Russia goes much deeper than a mere difference in the interpretation of words. The British Government, disguise it as they might, had completely altered their attitude in the course of 1755. In April they had instructed Williams to convince Russia that she "would be no better than an Asiatic Power were they (*sic*) to remain inactive and give the King of Prussia an opportunity of putting in execution his ambitious, dangerous, and long-concerted schemes of aggrandisement."[3] In January 1756 they had themselves, by making the Convention of Westminster with this aggressive prince, given him a foot both in the British and in the French camp, and therefore, so far as they could foresee, placed him in a better position than before to take the first opportunity of executing these ambitious plans. Indeed, since the Convention of Westminster guaranteed the neutrality of Germany, it might even be argued that it not only left Prussia free to display her aggressive tendencies outside of Germany—*i.e.*, against Russia—but by securing her rear actually encouraged her to do so. However this may be, it cannot be denied that the Russian Government had substantial justification for their contention that the Convention of

[1] *E.g.*, Bestuzhev's letter appended to Williams's letter of 19 February, 1755, to Holderness, in S.P.F., Poland.

[2] 25 June.

[3] Holderness to Williams, 11 April (very secret), partly printed in Raumer, *Frederick II*, 217.

Westminster was in contradiction to the Anglo-Russian convention of 30 September. The former treaty expressly excluded all foreign troops from Germany, whereas the latter was intended to secure the intervention of Russian troops in a war in Germany, although the British Government were so far correct in their contention that both treaties were part of the same policy, since the activity of the Russian troops was to be dependent on a British requisition.

That this change in the British attitude took place was, as has been shown in the preceding chapter, the work of Newcastle. He was appalled at the cost of the land war upon which Austria insisted before she would consent to defend Hanover and the Netherlands. The nearer danger—the rejection of the demand for subsidies by an indignant House of Commons, intent on the maritime war and careless of the Continent—loomed so large in Newcastle's short-sighted gaze that it obscured the much greater danger of the breakdown of Britain's system of Continental alliances in the midst of the life-and-death struggle with France. An understanding with Prussia was the line of least resistance, and Newcastle drifted along it, without considering seriously what effect his change of policy might have on his allies. Once again he showed what was perhaps his cardinal defect as a diplomatist—an insular inability to appreciate the point of view of the other European states, and particularly of his own allies. Now that Russia had accepted British subsidies, Newcastle and his colleagues regarded Russia as on the same footing as a German princeling. "As we pay the piper," Holderness wrote to Williams,[1] "it is not unreasonable for us to have the tune we like." They had secured an 'option' on the Russian troops, and intended to make use of that option in any way which they considered desirable in the interests of Britain. The Empress of Russia, on the other hand, had not forgotten the taunts of the other Powers at Aix-la-Chapelle, during the currency of the last treaty of subsidy with Britain, that Russia was a mere 'mercenary,' with no interest in the terms of peace. She had only concluded the new treaty because she believed that the British Government would use it in a way in consonance with Russian policy, and

[1] Private, 26 December, in Newport Papers.

the one maxim common to all directors of Russian policy at the court of Elizabeth was *Delenda est Borussia*.

Two days after the exchange of ratifications news of the Convention of Westminster arrived at Petersburg,[1] where its terms, and still more the suspicions entertained of additional secret articles, naturally produced a sensation. It placed the Great Chancellor in an awkward position, since he had extorted the Empress's ratification of the treaty of subsidy by emphasising the value of Britain as an ally against Prussia, and the danger that Britain, if Russia refused the assistance Britain demanded, would be driven in despair to make terms with Prussia which would leave the latter secure on her western frontiers and free to attack Russia.[2] The Empress had accepted the Chancellor's advice and concluded the subsidy treaty, but Britain had none the less come to an understanding with Prussia. It was now plain that Britain would certainly be no party to the projected attack on Prussia, and might even join Prussia to resist it. The Chancellor's enemies who had insisted on the *déclaration secrétissime* were accordingly justified in their distrust of British policy, and the Chancellor's prestige with the Empress and her camarilla of favourites of both sexes [3] suffered a rude shock. Naturally Bestuzhev reproached Williams with having kept him in ignorance of the change in British policy. Williams himself had not received information of the use which his Government proposed to make of the Anglo-Russian convention until the middle of January.[4] Even then his instructions [5] were to keep the information to himself, unless and until news of the Anglo-Prussian convention reached Petersburg from other sources;

[1] Waliszewski (408, n. 1) criticises Waddington (*Louis XV*, 225) for stating that the Convention of Westminster was known at Petersburg before the exchange of ratifications, and promptly errs himself, in company with Waddington, by stating that the most secret declaration was intended as a reply to the Convention of Westminster. The ratifications had been exchanged and the declaration accepted by Williams two days before the Anglo-Prussian convention was known at Petersburg.

[2] Martens, ix, 183.

[3] Kluchevsky, iv, 355–6.

[4] Williams to Holderness, 17 January. This omission is the more curious since other British ministers were informed (Newcastle to Keene, 28 August, 1755, in Add. MSS. 32858, f. 318). That Williams was informed even at this late date was due to the initiative of George II (Holderness to Newcastle, 21 December, in Add. MSS. 32861, f. 383).

[5] Holderness to Williams, 20 December (most secret), printed from the copy in the Newcastle Papers by Satow, 412–6.

and the secretiveness of the Great Chancellor, who persistently told him that the delay in exchanging ratifications was entirely due to the Empress's indolence, gave him no motive to defy his instructions and take the Chancellor into his confidence, as he would doubtless have done had he known of the tactics the Chancellor was employing to overcome the Empress's reluctance to ratify the treaty.

Williams himself had vied with the Chancellor in denouncing Prussia, and was in the same dilemma as his ally. Unlike the Chancellor, he failed to realise the seriousness of the situation; and, instead of warning Newcastle, he assured him that the Convention of Westminster, which he was stupid or insincere enough to call "a masterpiece of politics," would have no bad consequences at Petersburg.[1] His ingenuity asserted itself in his public attempts to justify and explain the sudden change of his Government's and his own attitude towards Prussia. As the ally of France Prussia was Russia's deadliest enemy; once united to Britain, Prussia became the natural ally of Russia. The mental acrobatics by which he sought to establish this contention might have been effective in a London drawing-room, but made no impression at Petersburg. Much more effective was his payment to the Great Chancellor of the promised bribe of £10,000 a few days after the exchange of ratifications in spite of the Russian *déclaration secrétissime*. This payment was made on condition that Bestuzhev would do everything in his power to reduce the bad impression which the Convention of Westminster would make on the Empress, and, as a first step in this direction, Williams and he drew up together a letter to be sent to the Empress along with Galitzin's despatches announcing the conclusion of the convention.

The £10,000 which he had just received and the prospect of more to come were not the only arguments which determined Bestuzhev to adhere to the British connection. He was on bad terms with Esterhazy, the Austrian ambassador, and his rival, the Vice-Chancellor, was in increasingly close touch with Austria. Even if Britain was useless as an ally against Prussia she remained hostile to France, and use could doubtless be

[1] Williams to Newcastle, 19 February (private), in Add. MSS. 32863, f. 25; Williams to Holderness, 19 February.

made of this even to increase the amount of British subsidies and bribes and to raise the influence of Russia in Europe. Finally, the health of the Empress being still very uncertain,[1] Bestuzhev would do nothing to alienate the young court, in whose favour Williams was firmly established.

"The Great Chancellor," Williams reports,

> begins to be extremely jealous of my credit with the Great Duchess at which Her Imperial Highness is offended and told me the other day that whenever I pleased she would tell the Great Chancellor that if he expected to live well with her he must live well with me, but in a conversation I have lately had with that minister . . . we have settled that affair to each other's perfect satisfaction.[1]

Bestuzhev, therefore, continued to support British interests at Petersburg with all his might,[2] and the influence of the Grand Duchess effected a temporary reconciliation between him and the Shuvalovs. When the Vice-Chancellor [3] attempted to secure the denunciation of the convention of 30 September, on the ground that Britain had violated its terms by concluding the Anglo-Prussian convention, his proposal was defeated in the council by six votes to four.[4]

Although Britain's enemies had failed to make an overt and immediate breach in the Anglo-Russian alliance, that alliance had been shaken to its foundations. The real danger lay not in the opposition of the Vice-Chancellor, whose personal influence with the Empress had declined with the rise of the Shuvalovs, but in the risk of a final breach between the Great Chancellor and the Shuvalovs, and, above all, in the Empress's personal hostility to Frederick II. It is said that her first inclination on learning of the Convention of Westminster had been to revoke her ratification of the Anglo-Russian treaty of subsidy.[5] She stormed at the Great Chancellor, denounced

[1] Williams to Holderness (most secret), 19 February.
[2] Martens, ix, 205.
[3] It might have been expected that the Vice-Chancellor, who had formerly been the leader of the Prussian party, would now have supported Britain, but he no longer received bribes from Frederick (*Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 34), and was anxious to win the confidence either of France or Austria (Arneth, v, 45). In any case the Great Chancellor's support of British interests would have been sufficient to keep him hostile to Britain (Herzen Memoir, 251).
[4] Williams to Holderness, 27 March, 11 April ; Ranke, xxx, 165.
[5] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 262.

him as a traitor who was sold to Britain,[1] and told Esterhazy that far from expecting George II to treat amicably with Prussia she "had expected that the King and the Court of Vienna would have formed some system for reducing the King of Prussia's power, which she was very ready and desirous to do at all times." [2]

The Convention of Westminster was a clear indication that Britain would be no party to the projected attack on Prussia, and the Empress summoned the council of ministers to debate, in view of this fact, the most effective methods of crushing the Prussian power. The council met on 25 March, under the presidency of the Empress, and came to the following decisions. To encourage Austria to attack Prussia, Russia should offer to assist her with 80,000 troops and promise not to lay down her arms until Austria had recovered Silesia and Glatz. Realising that the main obstacle to the execution of this programme was Prussia's alliance with France, the council further decided that Russia should attempt to procure a promise of the neutrality of France in the Continental war.[3] A few days after the council had reached these decisions Esterhazy received instructions from Kaunitz to inform the Russian Government, under the seal of the utmost secrecy,[4] of Austria's negotiations with France, and to inquire whether Russia was ready to attack the King of Prussia whenever circumstances should permit. Further councils then met at Petersburg, approved in principle Kaunitz's negotiations with France, and promised that Russia would accede to the treaty between Austria and France if it should be successfully concluded. Further, Russia offered, in accordance with the resolutions of the council of 25 March, if Austria was willing to do likewise, to attack Prussia during the year 1756 with 80,000 men, and not to lay down her arms till Maria Theresa had recovered Silesia and Glatz.[5] Kaunitz had thus, before concluding

[1] Ranke, xxx, 162–3.

[2] Williams to Holderness, 19 February: *cf.* Swart's despatch of 23 March in Add. MSS. 6871, f. 57.

[3] Solovev, xxiv, 26 ff.

[4] Martens, i, 190.

[5] Arneth, iv, 434–5; Vandal, *Louis XV et Elizabeth*, 273–4. In a letter to the Grand Duchess Bestuzhev explained that Austria was "so much out of humour with England that [Russia] was obliged to soothe and flatter the Empress-Queen lest she might be provoked to take engagements with the Court of Versailles." (Williams to Holderness, 11 April.)

the first Treaty of Versailles, taken Russia into his confidence and secured the full approval of the Empress. Britain's conduct in concluding the Convention of Westminster behind the backs of her allies appeared the more offensive at Petersburg.[1] At subsequent conferences, to which Esterhazy was admitted, Russia's share in military operations in the projected war was actually discussed,[2] and various portions of Prussian territory were assigned to Russia, and, if they took part in the war, Saxony and Sweden.[3]

Bestuzhev, however, did his best to remove the Empress's displeasure with himself and to distract her attention from the unsatisfactory conduct of the British Government by setting up an extraordinary council, composed of the ten persons who formed the ordinary council with the addition of the Empress, who intended to preside in person, which was to meet twice a week to discuss means of preventing the further growth of Prussian power and of strengthening the bonds between the two imperial courts and Britain. The creation of this council was probably due in part to Bestuzhev's desire to attack Prussia while France was occupied in the war with Britain, but it was also intended to compel his enemies to show their hands openly [4] and to weary the Empress of business; and, in fact, the Empress rarely appeared after the first few meetings of this council. Williams rejoiced to see the Empress's aversion to business reasserting itself, and reported that "though it is a hard task to determine Her Imperial Majesty to anything yet it is a very easy one to prevent her taking any resolution: Her whole Ministry can hardly do the first: and almost the weakest of them can do the latter." [5]

So long as Prussia adhered to the Convention of Westminster and France to her determination to avoid taking part in a land war all that Britain really required of Russia was inaction. Unfortunately the British ministers were not content with this. They grudged paying £100,000 a year merely to intimidate Prussia and guarantee her observance of the Convention of Westminster, especially as they were now fairly confident that Frederick was sincere in his desire to preserve the peace of Germany.

[1] Coxe, *Lord Walpole*, ii, 421, n.
[2] Esterhazy to Maria Theresa, 22 April, in Arneth, v, 47.
[3] Arneth, v, 46–7.
[4] Bain, 195.
[5] Williams to Holderness, 11 April.

Newcastle was determined to obtain all the advantages he had promised himself from the subsidy treaty with Russia and the resulting Convention of Westminster. Keith was instructed [1] to try and bully Austria into accepting Britain's lead and coming to an understanding with Prussia, not with France; but Newcastle began to see, what he ought to have known from the beginning, that Austria's attitude would prevent the addition of Prussia to the old system, and might even lead to a Franco-Austrian *rapprochement*.[2] In view of this possibility it was essential to make sure of Russia, and in spite of the vigorous protests of Galitzin, the Russian ambassador at London, that the Convention of Westminster ought to have been communicated previously to Russia and that Britain's failure to make the communication violated the subsidy treaty,[3] Newcastle was misled [4] by Williams's despatches into the belief that it was safe to treat Russia in the high-handed way which was Newcastle's idea of diplomacy when an ally refused to accept his policy unreservedly.

"The [most secret] declaration," he wrote,[3]

> must be returned and looked upon as *non avenue*: the court of Russia must explain themselves (and immediately) that if the King is attacked in his German dominions or any French troops should enter into Germany with that intention . . . we shall have the troops stipulated in our treaty with them.

In accordance with these and other instructions,[5] Williams on 8 May returned to the Chancellors the most secret declaration, and asked specifically whether Russia would fulfil her obligations under the treaty of subsidy if, as was currently reported to be their intention, France attacked Hanover and Kleve, while Austria made a diversion against Silesia.[6] The Russian reply was to send the most secret declaration to Galitzin with orders

[1] Newcastle to Keith, 23 March, in Add. MSS. 32863, f. 461b.

[2] Newcastle to Yorke, 23 March, in Add. MSS. 32863, f. 467; Newcastle to Williams, 2 April, in Add. MSS. 32864, f. 125.

[3] Newcastle to Williams, 2 April, in Add. MSS. 32864, f. 125.

[4] Newcastle to Devonshire, 13 March, in Add. MSS. 32863, f. 273.

[5] Holderness to Williams, 30 March; Newcastle to Williams (private), 2 April, in Add. MSS. 32864, f. 125. The departure of the messenger was postponed until 2 April to enable Newcastle to write the private letter of instructions to Williams. The relations between Newcastle and Holderness during Newcastle's premiership show a notable and hitherto unremarked advance towards the effective control of foreign policy by the Prime Minister.

[6] Williams to Holderness, 5 June; Martens, ix, 206–7.

to return it to Holderness—an implied refusal to assist Britain in the event of a French attack on Hanover. When he heard of what had been done Williams had already received further instructions informing him that France had actually attacked Minorca, and ordering him to invite the Russian ministers' acknowledgment that the *casus fœderis* had arisen.[1] In the circumstances it would have been futile to renew his application for assistance, and he therefore frankly acknowledged—for the first and last time in his diplomatic career—that he was at a loss to know what to do. The Empress, he reported,[2] was as hostile as ever to Prussia, but there were strong military and financial arguments against war with Prussia. If the first instalment of the British subsidy was not immediately paid Russia would declare that Britain had broken the Anglo-Russian treaty of subsidy; if it were paid it would possibly be used to wage war on Prussia.

Williams, with that lack of balance which distinguished him throughout his career, rushed from an unjustifiable optimism to a more justified but much exaggerated despair. This reaction was intensified by personal mortification. At the end of April [3] the French agent Douglas, at the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor,[4] had reappeared at Petersburg, this time with official instructions from the French Government and a credential letter from Rouillé to Voronzov.[5] The objects of his mission were primarily to arrange for the resumption of normal diplomatic relations between the two courts; and, secondly, to increase the bad feeling between Russia and Britain and purchase the neutrality of Russia in the war between France and Britain by compensating her for the loss of British subsidies.[6] Douglas was received with open arms at Petersburg by the *entourage* of the Empress, who regarded his appearance as a favourable omen of French neutrality in the projected attack by Austria and Russia upon Prussia, and entertained also the idea that Russia

[1] Holderness to Williams, 11, 18 April.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 5 June. [3] On 20 April (Rambaud, ii, 18).
[4] See Voronzov's letters to Douglas of 24 and 27 February, 16 March (all O.S.), in A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, ff. 174, 177, 194.
[5] Copy appended to Williams's despatch of 28 September (secret/France) to Holderness (Paper No. 2).
[6] Rambaud, ii, 18–27. *Cf.* Tercier to Douglas, 11 May (printed in *Archives Voronzov*, iii, 578–81).

might win prestige cheaply by mediating a peace between Britain and France.[1]

Immediately after his arrival Douglas informed Voronzov of the first part of his instructions,[2] and on 18 May he received from the Vice-Chancellor the reply of the Empress,[3] in which she agreed to his request for the exchange of ministers of equal rank as soon as possible between the two courts. This reply was sent to Golovkin, the Russian minister at The Hague, and handed by him to the French ambassador there to be transmitted to Versailles, but shortly afterwards Bektyeev, one of the Vice-Chancellor's dependents, was sent to Versailles as *chargé d'affaires*. Bektyeev's instructions [4] throw a clear light on the attitude and intentions of the anti-British party at Petersburg, since they were drawn up without Bestuzhev's knowledge.[5] The "principal object" of his mission was simply to convince France that Russia was ready to renew her former friendship and good relations with her. In addition, he was to find out the exact situation of France with regard to England and the other Powers, "and above all the King of Prussia." It was also particularly recommended to the envoy to discover what the French Government really thought of the Convention of Westminster, which the Vice-Chancellor's faction actually suspected might have been concluded with the connivance of France. Bektyeev's supplementary instructions [6]—in the form of question by the envoy and answer by Voronzov—are drawn up in vague and indefinite terms,[7] but it is clear that the envoy was to inform the French Government that Russia had not, as yet, accepted the advantageous offers of Britain in the belief that the Austrian ministers

[1] Catherine to Williams, 12 August, O.S., in Goriaïnow, 36.

[2] Williams to Holderness, 28 September (secret/France) (Paper No. 1).

[3] A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 234; another copy appended to Williams's despatch to Holderness of 28 September (secret/France) (Paper No. 9).

[4] Solovev, *History of Russia*, xxiv, 70–1.

[5] A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 236.

[6] Copy appended to Williams's despatch to Holderness of 28 September (secret/France) (Paper No. 11), printed in *Archives Voronzov*, iii, 422.

[7] *Cf.* especially point No. 4 of these instructions: "Si on me demande de notre convention conclue avec l'Angleterre? Ce point est fort délicat et quoique la France souhaite avidement de le savoir il ne faut [pas] entrer dans aucune explication, mais on peut dire que par des circonstances des affaires et du tems il se fait beaucoup de détours dans le monde en ajoutant que S.M.I. est un fidèle ami à ses alliés et sans extrémité il ne lui plaît pas d'en changer."

were correct in their assertion that France was more willing than Britain to concur in the execution of Russia's plans. If the French ministers asked for details of these plans he was to refer them to Starhemberg, the Austrian ambassador at Versailles.

In spite of the reserve of the Vice-Chancellor towards his envoy, there can be, in view of the anti-Prussian resolutions of the councils of March and April, no doubt as to the nature of Russia's plans; and the intentions of the Voronzov clique are made still clearer in subsequent despatches from Douglas, in which Voronzov openly tries to arouse French hostility to Prussia. Douglas urged his Government [1] to inform the court of Petersburg directly of the progress of its negotiations with Austria, and, above all, to say frankly what their attitude was towards Prussia. Rouillé, before he received this letter, knew the ambiguous and to him unsatisfactory nature of Bektyeev's instructions.[2] In his reply to Douglas [3] he refused, somewhat brusquely, to say anything further about the French negotiations with Austria, emphasised the determination of the French Government to preserve the peace of Europe, and therefore, by implication, rejected the plans of Russia to wage war upon Prussia.

Nothing, indeed, was further from Rouillé's mind than to subsidise and co-operate with the imperial courts in their attack upon Prussia. His aims in negotiating with Russia are admirably interpreted by the Swedish minister at Versailles in one of his despatches: [4]

"France's measures with Russia," Bunge wrote,

> have no other views but to confirm more and more the peace of the North and to be secure that Russia may not attempt anything against France or her allies in favour of England. The accounts hitherto received from the court of Russia are agreeable to the wishes of France and they seem here to grow more and more san-

[1] A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 270 : Douglas to Tercier, 26 May/5 June.
[2] *Cf.* Bunge to Höpken, 22 July (intercepted), in Add. MSS. 32866, f. 243, for the decline of French belief in Russian sincerity which followed Bektyeev's mission.
[3] A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 334 : Rouillé to Douglas, 10 August.
[4] Bunge to Höpken, 18 June (intercepted), in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 358 (translated). Cf. *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 74.

guine in their hopes that by the interposition and endeavours of the court of Vienna, Russia may be prevailed with to sit quite still in the present war with England.

There were therefore even greater divergencies between Russia and France than between Austria and France, and up to the invasion of Saxony by Frederick II the net result of Franco-Russian negotiations had been an agreement for the resumption of regular diplomatic intercourse between the two states.[1]

Douglas's mission and the Franco-Russian *rapprochement*, coming so soon after the first Treaty of Versailles, gravely alarmed the British Government. Austria had broken up the old system by the Treaty of Versailles; Russia seemed to be on the point of following her into the French camp.[2] Not only had Douglas been well received at Petersburg, but the Russian ministers at foreign courts had received orders to live on better terms with those of France,[3] and Yorke had discovered the secret correspondence between the Russian and French Governments through their ministers at The Hague.[4] The situation at Petersburg appeared worse than ever when reports arrived from the Dutch envoy, Swart, that the Great Chancellor, on whom all Newcastle's dependence was placed, was at loggerheads with Williams and desired a change of ambassador.[5] Similar reports from Berlin,[6] and Frederick's growing suspicions that British influence at Petersburg would not be strong enough to curb the Empress's hostility to Prussia,[7] increased the anxiety of the British Government. The fuller instructions which Galitzin had lately received from his court did little to calm these apprehensions. The Russian Government refused to take back the most

[1] Williams to Holderness, 28 September (secret/France) (based on Russian State papers procured by the Grand Duchess).

[2] Newcastle to Mitchell, 28 May, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 128.

[3] Yorke to Holderness (secret), 23 May, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 93; Champeaux to Rouillé (intercepted), 4 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 200.

[4] Yorke to Holderness (secret), 23 May, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 93; Yorke to Holderness (private), 15 June, in Add. MSS. 35436, f. 656.

[5] Yorke to Holderness (private), 13 April, in Add. MSS. 35436, f. 506, and enclosed despatch from Swart of 23 March (Add. MSS. 6871, f. 57); Newcastle to Yorke, 11 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 257.

[6] Mitchell to Holderness (most secret), 3 June, in S.P.F., Prussia (partly printed in Ellis, *Original Letters*, 2nd series, iv, 371); *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 362, 373, 419.

[7] Mitchell to Newcastle, 14 May, in Add. MSS. 32864, f. 550; Mitchell to Holderness, 22 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 378.

secret declaration, although they did not declare the treaty void: "by which," Newcastle wrote plaintively to Yorke,

> I suppose they will accept the subsidy and the presents [to the Chancellors and their subordinates]. They fling out that though they are by this under no engagements against France, they may *by a new treaty* take such an engagement, which I think is a plain proof that they are to be had, but they will cost dear.[1]

It was, however, imperative in Newcastle's view to form a counter-system to the first Treaty of Versailles, "and the first Power to be secured and without which we can do nothing is Russia." [1] Indeed, without Russia even the loyalty of Prussia to the Convention of Westminster was doubtful, and Britain would not have a single ally in Europe or America.[2] Andrew Mitchell, now established at Berlin as the British minister, did his best to conceal from Frederick the worst features of Williams's reports,[3] but deception was not his forte. His attempts merely served to confirm Frederick's belief that the intelligence of the decline of British influence at Petersburg, which he had received from other sources,[4] was well founded. He declared that if Russia attacked him he would attack the Empress-Queen,[5] and urged the British Government immediately to recall Williams and "replace him by some man of temper and conduct who might be able to restore our affairs at that court by acting cordially and confidentially with the Great Chancellor." [6]

The crucial question, therefore, in the view both of Britain and of Prussia, was how to secure Russia. Newcastle as usual was full of expedients. He thought at first of trying to use Saxon influence at Petersburg by appealing for assistance to his old friend Count Flemming—a convinced partisan of the old system. Another of his schemes was to win the confidence of Galitzin, Keyserling, and Golovkin (the Russian ministers at London,

[1] Newcastle to Yorke, 11 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 257. *Cf.* Newcastle to Hardwicke, 12 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 277.
[2] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 12 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 277.
[3] Mitchell to Holderness, 27 May (S.P.F., Prussia, 65) and 22 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 378.
[4] Mitchell to Holderness (most secret), 3 June, (secret) 7 June, 19 June, all in S.P.F., Prussia, 65.
[5] Mitchell to Holderness (private and secret), 24 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 406.
[6] Mitchell to Holderness, 22 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 378. Cf. *Archives*, iii, 191–2.

Vienna, and The Hague respectively), and persuade them to exert their influence at Petersburg in favour of Britain.[1] Both schemes were futile—the first because the Saxon court had long desired the reconciliation of Russia and France and was as eager as Russia and Austria to have a war with Prussia, and therefore used all its influence at Petersburg against and not in favour of Britain; the second because the combined influence of Galitzin, Keyserling, and Golovkin was negligible, and Keyserling's complaisance [2] towards Newcastle nearly led to his recall.[3] The third device of the ingenious Premier was worse than futile—the sending of a British squadron to the Baltic. This, Newcastle thought,[4] "would contribute more to secure us Russia than anything [else] which we can do." In fact, although the step, now contemplated by Newcastle for the first time, and subsequently pressed upon the British Government by Frederick II, was never executed, the mere rumour that it was being considered at London offended the Russian Government and increased the tension between Britain and Russia.

The only method which afforded any hope of regaining Russia was to offer an increase of subsidy if the obnoxious declaration was withdrawn.[5] Accordingly when Galitzin called on Holderness, insisted on returning the most secret declaration, and finally flung it on the table, where Holderness allowed it to remain, with the remark that he "neither accepted nor rejected it," [6] Holderness definitely offered to increase the subsidy if the declaration was withdrawn. The choice of Galitzin as the channel of communication with Petersburg was due partly to Newcastle's idea that Galitzin, if conciliated and flattered, would be able to exercise considerable influence at Petersburg in favour of Britain,[7] but chiefly to the fact that Williams had entirely lost

[1] Newcastle to Holderness, 20 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 373; Holderness to Mitchell, 27 July, in S.P.F., Prussia.

[2] Keith to Holderness, 2 June, in S.P.F., Germany (Empire); Keith to Holderness (private), 7 June, in Add. MSS. 35480, f. 181; Holderness to Keith (private), 11 June, in Add. MSS. 35480, f. 188, and subsequent correspondence.

[3] Williams to Holderness, 26 June, 9 July (private and secret).

[4] Newcastle to Holderness, 20 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 373.

[5] Holderness to Williams, 25 June. This offer would have been more likely to be accepted had it been accompanied by the offer of bribes to the Vice-Chancellor and the Shuvalovs (Yorke to Newcastle, 18 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 339).

[6] Holderness to Williams, 25 June.

[7] Newcastle to Galitzin, 25 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 423.

the confidence of his Government, which desired to give the Great Chancellor another means of communication in case the reports of his quarrel with Williams were well founded.[1] At first Newcastle's intention was to leave Williams in complete ignorance of the new overtures to Russia; but, in consequence of Holderness's representations that this would be most unbusiness-like, Williams was informed,[2] and the option of replying either through him or through Galitzin was left to the Russian Government.[3] The main arguments on which the British Government relied to prevent Russia joining Austria and France,[4] being based on the assumption that France was the "common enemy," carried as little weight at Petersburg as at Vienna, because both courts regarded Prussia as *the* enemy, and to them France was the Power to be conciliated, detached from Prussia, and if possible induced to join in an attack upon Prussia. Holderness's chief subsidiary argument—that the commercial interests of Russia demanded peace and the preservation of the British alliance—carried as little weight with the Shuvalov party, which was momentarily in the ascendant at Petersburg, because they failed to see why Britain should have a virtual monopoly of Russia's foreign trade and were eager to conclude a commercial treaty with France.[5]

The alarm of the British Government was fully shared by their ambassador at Petersburg, who was mortified [6] by the cordial reception given at court to Douglas. He exaggerated the danger to British interests of the apparent Franco-Russian *rapprochement*, and did not attach sufficient weight to the much more dangerous secret negotiations of Austria at Petersburg, of which he was very imperfectly informed.[7] One good result, however, did follow Douglas's mission. The Great Chancellor was

[1] Holderness to Newcastle, 23 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 397. Already, on 28 May, Holderness had written privately to Williams asking him to explain the origin of the rumours that he had quarrelled with the Chancellor.

[2] It appears that similar instructions were secretly sent to Wolff, this fact being carefully concealed from Williams's friends in the Ministry (*Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 32).

[3] Holderness to Newcastle, 23 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 397.

[4] Holderness to Williams, 25 June.

[5] Douglas to Tercier, 12/23 May, in A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 236. Cf. *ibid.*, f. 270, 26 May/5 June.

[6] d'Eon to Tercier, 13/24 August (A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 363); Williams to Holderness (secret), 12 June, 26 June, etc.

[7] Williams to Holderness, 6 July.

struck dumb when he was at last informed of the Vice-Chancellor's negotiation with Douglas. He had not forgotten his struggle with La Chétardie, and his alarm was increased when he discovered that the first act of Douglas had been to present a Note to the Vice-Chancellor pressing him to acquaint the Empress with Bestuzhev's corruption and treachery and thus to secure his dismissal.[1] Bestuzhev's loyalty to Britain could not but be confirmed,[2] although, on the other hand, the way in which the *rapprochement* with France had been settled by the Empress and Vice-Chancellor behind the back of the Great Chancellor was a striking proof of the decline of his influence at Petersburg.

The situation at Petersburg, however, now took a favourable turn. Kaunitz had failed, for the meantime at least, to secure the concurrence of France in an attack upon Prussia. He had too much respect for Frederick and Prussia to attack them, as the Empress Elizabeth might possibly have been ready to do, even without assurances of French support.[3] He was well aware of the corruption and inefficiency of the Russian bureaucracy and army; he knew that subsidies would be required to maintain the Russian troops in the field—subsidies which Austria was quite unable to pay, as all her financial resources would be needed to maintain the efficiency of her own troops;[4] finally, the uncertain health of the Empress Elizabeth and the notorious admiration of the Grand Duke for Prussia made the continuance of Russian support—inefficient and dearly bought as it would be—uncertain. He was alarmed, therefore, rather than gratified, when Esterhazy informed him of Russia's enthusiastic reception of the overtures he had made upon receipt of the news of the Convention of Westminster.[5] It was essential

[1] A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 208. There were rumours at Petersburg that Bestuzhev's agents had tried to assassinate the French Minister (Rambaud, ii, 18).

[2] Williams to Holderness, 26 June, 9 July (private and secret).

[3] Arneth, v, 47, based on Kaunitz's letter to Esterhazy of 22 May. If Russia's plans for an offensive war were accepted, Kaunitz pointed out that perhaps even France, and certainly Britain and other Powers, would support the King of Prussia. *Cf.* Waddington, *Louis XV*, 337, 353.

[4] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 403.

[5] Kaunitz to Esterhazy, 22 May, 1756: "Der Russische Hof gehet allzu geschwind und hitzig zu Wercke, ehe noch die Sachen reif sind, wodurch alles verdorben werden könnte," in Arneth, v, 476, n. 66.

for his plans that France should take part in the Austro-Russian war with Prussia,[1] not merely with the auxiliary corps of 24,000 men conditionally promised by the first Treaty of Versailles, but by providing Russia with a large subsidy. And since only if Prussia took the offensive was France bound in any way whatever to Austria, it was still more essential to the ultimate success of Kaunitz's negotiations that Russia should not display too openly her aggressiveness towards Prussia. Esterhazy, therefore, was instructed to moderate the warlike ardour of the Empress until the result of Austria's further negotiations with France was known.[2]

The first result of his representations was the countermanding of the orders which had already been given for the concentration of additional troops in Livonia,[3] and the cessation of naval preparations.[4] The Empress was naturally piqued [5] at Kaunitz's cool reception of the Russian overtures which he had himself provoked, and the first Treaty of Versailles did little to remove her dissatisfaction. Kaunitz's masterpiece was indeed rather a disappointment to the court of Petersburg, although the disappointment was mitigated by the knowledge that negotiations between France and Austria were still proceeding. Nevertheless it showed conclusively that France, at least for the present, was as little inclined as Britain to connive at, far less to participate in, an Austro-Russian attack upon Prussia, and thus dashed the hopes raised at Petersburg on the inadequate foundation of Douglas's mission. The Empress, who for the last few months had raged against Prussia, now began to storm at the perfidy of France.[6] Just at this time, too, the £100,000, being the first instalment of the subsidy under the convention of 30 September, was received by Wolff,[7] the British consul at Petersburg, through whom remittances were made. The prospect of this sum being immediately paid into her coffers was a bait more attractive to

[1] Lodge, 92.

[2] Ranke, xxx, 195.

[3] Williams to Holderness, 15 June ; *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 15. Williams attributed it to the cost of forage in Livonia. *Cf.* Arneth, v, 47 ; Ruville, ii, 35.

[4] Williams to Holderness, 6 July ; *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 41.

[5] Williams reports (to Holderness, 29 June) that he had been much more graciously received at court by the Empress than for six months past. *Cf.* Williams to Holderness, 13 July.

[6] Williams to Holderness, 23 June, 7 August.

[7] Williams to Holderness, 19 June.

the Empress, whose extravagance left her in constant need of ready money, than the best turned political arguments of Newcastle and Holderness.

The Great Chancellor, whose illnesses throughout his career coincided with singular accuracy with the periods at which his influence was on the decline,[1] had now recovered. At one of his meetings with Williams the latter pointed out that Russia would doubtless be invited to accede to the first Treaty of Versailles.

The Great Chancellor answered

> that he did not doubt the French party at court would do everything to promote it. But for his part he would never abandon the system which he had introduced and supported at this court for fifteen years and upon which he thought the liberties of Europe depended: he owned that at present his credit was not so great as it had been but as he was sure his system was a right one he did not doubt of prevailing in the end: to this he added that I had nothing to do at present here but to keep myself quiet and have patience. . . . I begged him to chalk out the methods which he thought would be the most effectual for bringing back this court to a right way of thinking. To this the Great Chancellor answered that his whole thoughts had been employed about what I had proposed for some time past: but that considering how strong the present torrent here was against us the best advice he could give me was to lye still: that all the plans of his opposers at court were so wild that he hoped they would never take place, but that if they did they never could be of any duration. . . .[2]

Bestuzhev then inquired anxiously as to Britain's relations with Austria, urged the British Government "to accommodate matters with the House of Austria," and assured Williams that "the Austrians did not push things on here so violently as [he] imagined."[2] A few days later Williams again saw the Great Chancellor,[3] who was still more emphatic in his assurances:

"You must give me time," he said,

> and you must take patience, but you may assure the King from me that I am now able and resolved to bring this court back into

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, viii, 151 ; x, 477.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 6 July.
[3] Williams to Holderness, 9 July.

a right way of thinking and I have no doubt of doing it in six months at furthest.[1]

As his price Bestuzhev, with his customary frankness in these matters, named an annual pension of £2500, which, together with his official salary of seven thousand roubles, would "enable him to live independently of everybody but the King and the Empress." [2]

These emphatic assurances raise two fundamental questions: (1) Was the Great Chancellor sincere? (2) Was there a reasonable chance of his being able to fulfil his promises? Both questions must be answered in the affirmative. Bestuzhev's reasons for adhering to the British connection have already been examined, and it is noteworthy that he asked not for a lump sum, but for a pension, which obviously would only be paid so long as his good intentions produced tangible results at Petersburg.[3] Catherine, and Bestuzhev's confidants, Keyserling,[4] Prasse,[5] and Swart,[5] are unanimous in their statements that the Great Chancellor was still the loyal adherent of Britain, although Swart suspected that the Chancellor "had a mind to make France join the King of Prussia by Russia's attacking him," [6] and this conjecture finds some support in the anti-Prussian intrigues of the Chancellor in the early summer of 1756,[7] and in the Chancellor's remark to Williams that if by the first Treaty of Versailles "the King of Prussia's power could have been lessened without prejudice to the interests of Great Britain, he should not have disapproved of it." [8] The unsatisfactory nature of the first Treaty of Versailles gave Bestuzhev an additional reason to cling to the British alliance.

[1] Williams to Holderness, 9 July.
[2] Williams to Holderness (very secret), 9 July.
[3] Holderness to Williams (most secret), 6 August. The pension was granted on this condition. Bestuzhev was surprised at this ready compliance with his demands (Williams to Catherine, 23 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 73–4)), and his zeal was immediately quickened (Catherine to Williams, 27 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 87)).
[4] P.S. from Steinberg, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 453, dated 30 June.
[5] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, *passim*.
[6] Yorke to Holderness (private) 30 July, 13 August, in Add. MSS. 35436, ff. 87 and 906; *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 126.
[7] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 420, 484.
[8] Williams to Holderness (private and secret), 9 July. *Cf.* the anti-Prussian remarks of the Chancellor at this time in Waliszewski, 412.

In regard to the second question there is ample evidence of a revival of Bestuzhev's influence at Petersburg. Esterhazy at this time repeatedly complained of Bestuzhev as a grave obstacle to success in his negotiations,[1] and, by intriguing to secure the dismissal of the Great Chancellor, alienated him still further.[2] At Vienna, where the ministers had formerly boasted that Russia was "absolutely at their command," [3] Keith reported that "they are much come down in their stile, and those who pretend to be in their secret own that it will be a difficult matter to induce the Czarina to enter into offensive measures." [4] At Versailles also the revival of Bestuzhev's influence was clearly felt. Bunge recorded: [5]

> Great as the appearances were at first of engaging the Court of Russia in a formal convention with France and Vienna, more difficulties have occurred from the subsidy treaty between England and Russia than were to be expected from the language and I may say the assurances of the Court of Petersburg [*sc.* the Vice-Chancellor].[6]

He hoped that these difficulties would ultimately be overcome, but believed that in the meantime "Russia will observe a strict neutrality . . . and carry on in the most secret manner the negotiation with France."

Not merely was the Great Chancellor's prestige reviving, but his enemies faltered in their stride. The Vice-Chancellor was jealous of the Shuvalovs and eager to share British bribes. Although for months past he had ostentatiously neglected and insulted Williams, he now made several attempts to secure a reconciliation with him, and solicited a contribution towards the completion and furnishing of his Petersburg mansion,[7] which was ultimately to be fitted up—a nine days' wonder at Petersburg—with the discarded furniture of the Pompadour.[8] Simultaneously Ivan Shuvalov made approaches to Williams,[9] and

[1] Arneth, v, 48–9.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 23 July.
[3] Keith to Williams, 19 June, in Add. MSS. 35492, f. 90.
[4] Keith to Williams, 25 August, in Add. MSS. 35492, f. 94b.
[5] Bunge to Höpken, 22 July (intercepted), in Add. MSS. 32866, f. 243.
[6] *Cf.* the reports from Petersburg of Prasse (*Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 41) and Swart (summarised by Yorke in private letters to Holderness of 9 and 13 July, in Add. MSS. 35436, ff. 80 and 82).
[7] Williams to Holderness (private and secret), 9 July.
[8] Herzen Memoir, 251.
[9] Williams to Holderness, 13 July.

although these advances were insincere they show a lack of self-confidence in the leaders of the anti-British party.

Encouraged by the irresolution of his enemies, the Great Chancellor had now devised a plan of campaign and communicated it to Williams.

> . . . our enemies are such silly fellows that they will soon commit such faults as will give me great advantages over them: I shall watch them with the utmost diligence and don't doubt that the King your master will soon be convinced that I serve him with all the fidelity, gratitude, and attachment that His Majesty can expect from me. What can any Russian mean by thinking of an alliance with France? and of even preferring it to that of England? Don't they see that Swedish and Polish affairs must be an eternal quarrel between us and can France be of any service to us on any occasion whatever? . . . our misfortune is that at present we have a young favourite at this court who can talk French and is fond of the French and their fashions; and he wants to see a French ambassador with a large train arrive at this court: his power is so great that there is sometimes no resisting it, but though I cannot always carry my points I am generally able to spoil such projects as I don't approve of. But our Monsieur Pompadour has set his heart upon having a French minister here and I am afraid he will prevail, though while I continue to be Her Imperial Majesty's minister nothing essential shall be done against the interests of England.[1]

This policy of masterly inactivity had served Bestuzhev well in similar crises in his past career,[2] and although it did not appeal to the impetuous British ambassador he had no option but to accept it. Almost at once an opportunity to carry out the Chancellor's declared policy was provided by troubles in Sweden,[3] where the French party dominated the Senate and were trying to reduce still further the royal power, already

[1] Williams to Holderness (private and secret), 9 July.

[2] Holderness to Mitchell, 13 July, S.P.F., Prussia, 65. Holderness was less optimistic in writing to Williams (6 August (private and secret)) when he remarks that it was " but a melancholy prospect to think that our best chance of bringing back the court of Russia to a right way of thinking arises from the errors of those who have an interest in carrying on measures destructive to the interest of their sovereign and it seems doubtful whether even the blunders he may commit may be sufficient to destroy the credit of a decided favourite."

[3] Williams to Keith, 13 July, in Add. MSS. 35481, f. 4; Holderness to Mitchell, 10 August, S.P.F., Prussia, 66.

narrowly circumscribed by the constitution of 1719. Adolphus Frederick of Sweden owed his throne to Russia,[1] and, although the Empress was disinclined to intervene to support the brother-in-law of Frederick II,[2] Russia was bound to defend her *protégé* in order to maintain her prestige, while her interests compelled her to prevent the further weakening of the royal authority, the only barrier to the complete control of Swedish resources by France. Already in January and February 1756 rumours of Sweden's naval preparations had alarmed the Russian Government and caused the despatch of threatening instructions to Panin, the able and energetic Russian minister at Stockholm.[3] The King of Sweden secretly appealed to Russia for assistance in defeating the French party, and under the pretext of informing the Russian court of the death of his mother sent a special envoy, Count Horn, to Petersburg.[4] While Horn's negotiation was proceeding at Petersburg, a few royalist partisans, probably with the secret encouragement of the Queen, engaged in a futile conspiracy, which was detected and the ringleaders executed. The King was now at the mercy of the senatorial party; Russia alone could save him, and on the maintenance of the royal authority depended her influence at Stockholm and her predominant position in the Baltic. The Russian Government immediately sent instructions to Panin to inform the Senate, flushed with victory and anxious to complete the humiliation of the monarchy, that Russia as guarantor of the constitution of 1719 was resolved to maintain it with all her power.[5] A situation had arisen which brought Russia and France face to face at Stockholm; and the Great Chancellor, seizing the opportunity, won a slight victory over his enemies in the Council, and felt strong enough to advise Williams to ask for the conference with the two Chancellors, which had hitherto been postponed on various pretexts.[6]

The British Government meantime had rejected Frederick's

[1] *Mémoires de Frédéric II*, i, 173–4; *English Historical Review* (October 1928), xliii, 554–70.
[2] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 152.
[3] Williams to Holderness, 6, 9, 16 March; *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 151–2, 419.
[4] Williams to Holderness, 2 March, etc.; *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 297, etc.
[5] Williams to Holderness, 17 July. *Cf.* Prasse's earlier report in *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 141.
[6] Williams to Holderness, 23 July.

suggestion of an alliance on the ground that this would alienate further the court of Petersburg,[1] and was delighted to learn that the situation at Petersburg was by no means as bad as they had been led to believe. This revulsion of feeling doubtless made them the readier to believe Williams's assurances that he possessed the entire confidence of the Great Chancellor,[2] especially as Bestuzhev, when questioned by Wolff, had expressed the utmost astonishment at the reports that he desired to get rid of Williams.[3] Bestuzhev certainly had sufficient reason to desire Williams's recall, since he was intensely jealous of Williams's intimacy with the Grand Duchess, and feared that his influence might induce the grand ducal couple to ruin themselves and their friends by futile schemes to thwart the will of the Empress. But, faced with a direct demand of the British Government, Bestuzhev did not care, particularly in view of Williams's intimacy with the Grand Duchess, to speak openly, and therefore disavowed the actions of his agents. Almost immediately afterwards he resumed his underhand intrigues to secure Williams's recall.[4]

For the time being, however, Williams had recovered the confidence of his Government, and Holderness inquired confidentially whether it might not be possible through the Chancellor or Grand Duchess to gain the favourite Shuvalov. If this could be done "anything in reason [by way of bribes] would be complied with."[5] In regard to the payment of the first instalment of the subsidy, Williams was to follow[6] the Great Chancellor's advice, always assuming that if the sum was paid over the Empress would tacitly withdraw the most secret declaration, agree to send troops to defend Hanover if attacked by France during the present war, assist Great Britain against Sweden if the latter intervened in the war, and, if Austria attacked Prussia in order to facilitate a French attack

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 65–6, 98.
[2] Williams to Holderness (private), 9 July; Holderness to Williams (private and secret), 6 August.
[3] Wolff to Holderness, 20 June, O.S.
[4] Mitchell to Holderness, 12 August (particular), S.P.F., Prussia, 66, reporting a conversation with Swart.
[5] Holderness to Williams (private), 6 August, in Newport Papers.
[6] Holderness to Williams, 6 August; Holderness to Mitchell, 6 August, in S.P.F., Prussia, 65.

on Hanover, remain neutral in the Austro-Prussian war and send the stipulated succours to Britain against France. This last demand raised a question which had not yet been squarely faced at Petersburg. Britain was drifting into alliance with Prussia,[1] Austria had already made a defensive alliance with France which would permit an offensive war against Prussia. The old system being irretrievably destroyed, Russia was called upon to choose between her two former allies, Britain and Austria, and to abandon her hostility either to France or to Prussia.

There was little chance of the Russian Government reaching a speedy decision on this fundamental issue. What the Bestuzhev party lacked in numbers was to some extent repaired by the greater adroitness of their leader. Moreover, long experience in the conduct of foreign affairs had given him a self-confidence which his enemies lacked. The Empress had a genuine respect for her Chancellor's opinion, and knew that, although he was corrupt, his enemies were almost as much in the pay of foreign Powers [2] and were less competent to direct Russian foreign policy. The ultimate decision rested with the Empress—always suspicious of the interested advice offered by her ministers. Her preoccupation with her pleasures left her little time to form a personal opinion, even had her feeble and frivolous mind been capable of grasping the intricacies of European diplomacy—which it emphatically was not.[3] Her dominant motive seems to have been a personal hostility to Frederick II, long carefully fostered by Austrian and British diplomatists. But this motive was weakened by a genuine repugnance to shed the blood of thousands of her subjects,[4] and by a taste for subsidies, without which indeed the Russian army and navy was in no state to enter upon war.[5] What the ultimate decision of the Empress would have been had Frederick II

[1] Newcastle to Mitchell (very secret), 9 July, in Add. MSS. 32866, f. 98.

[2] Peter Shuvalov's and the Vice-Chancellor's support of France was largely due to their interest in a contract for supplying France with naval stores (Holderness to Williams, 31 August), and they hoped also to secure a monopoly to sell tobacco in France (Herzen Memoir, 251).

[3] Kluchevsky, iv, 355.

[4] Williams to Mitchell, 27 November, 1756, in Add. MSS. 6824, f. 76; Keith to Holderness, 12 May, 1758, in S.P.F., Russia; *Archives Voronzov*, v, 31.

[5] Williams to Holderness (private and secret), 9 July.

not invaded Saxony must remain a matter of conjecture.[1] If she were following any settled policy at all, which is more than doubtful, it was probably to await the result of Kaunitz's negotiations at Versailles. If Kaunitz had succeeded in securing French support against Prussia she would almost certainly have joined in the proposed attack; if the negotiation had broken down she would probably have contented herself with extracting large subsidies from Britain as the price of assistance against France, and would have refrained from an attack on Prussia.

The complete breakdown of the health of the Empress,[2] whose robust constitution had at last been ruined by a life of unbridled licence, increased her constitutional indolence [3] and tendency to procrastination. And the longer the Empress procrastinated the greater the chance that Bestuzhev, especially after his zeal had been animated by Britain's promise of a pension,[4] would find some means of defeating his enemies and recovering his ascendancy. Moreover, the continued ill-health of the Empress introduced a new factor by giving to the "young court" a political importance it had not hitherto had. The Shuvalovs and their timorous ally, the Vice-Chancellor, were afraid to push matters too far, since at any moment the death of the Empress might leave them at the mercy of the "young court." [5]

The Grand Duchess was no longer the disinterested friend, but the heavily bribed adherent and spy of the British Government.[6] In August she received a 'loan' of £10,000 on the

[1] The above analysis of the situation suggests that the generally accepted view that the Empress had already decided against Britain requires modification; the contention of Ilchester (i, 302) that Williams and the Prime Minister (*sic*) Bestuzhev had been successful in pacifying the Empress and persuading her not to attack Prussia finds no support in any official documents.

[2] Catherine to Williams, 3 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 4) and 6 September, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 121).

[3] Bain, 137.

[4] Catherine to Williams, 27 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 87); Williams to Catherine, 28 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 93).

[5] Yorke in his private letter of 17 January, 1758 (Add. MSS. 35437, f. 120), quotes Swart's remark that "his court barometer made him think [the Empress] very ill indeed, because he saw the Vice-Chancellor and Shuvalov very assiduous in paying their court to the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess."

[6] Williams to Holderness (most secret), 9 July; Holderness to Williams (most secret), 6 August.

understanding that it would be used for "the King's service." Catherine, with her usual unscrupulousness, used the bulk of it to reduce her debts, but displayed that generosity towards her lovers which was to characterise the future Empress by making Poniatowski a present of £500.[1] Her secret correspondence with Williams enables one to follow from hour to hour the ever-changing interior of the Russian court, and in spite of the fulsome compliments exchanged by the two correspondents, leaves no possible doubt of her sincere admiration of Williams and devotion to British interests.[2] Catherine's power to help was, however, by no means equal to her inclinations; and all her efforts to secure more than professions of devotion from the Shuvalovs,[3] although sometimes they seemed on the point of success, were destined to end in failure. Still, even apart from the unsettling effect which she exercised on the policy of the Shuvalovs, Catherine was a valuable ally. She procured reliable information on all kinds of subjects, and on one occasion at least "sat up all night to translate [a despatch from Constantinople] out of the Russ language" which gave an account of Turkish uneasiness at the Austro-French alliance.[4] Her shrewd common sense steadied the mercurial spirits of the British ambassador, and saved him from more than one gross blunder, while she contrived to smooth over the continual friction between her two advisers—Williams and Bestuzhev.

Williams had had on 26 July a conference with the two Chancellors, in which, in accordance with his instructions of 25 June, he offered to increase the war subsidy if Russia would admit that the treaty extended to an attack by France upon the British or Hanoverian dominions in Europe, and tried to convince the Russian ministers that their interest was to adhere to Britain and not to Austria, which was bound to the chariot wheels of France. "Things here," he reported, "have a very

[1] Catherine to Williams, 31 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 110).

[2] This correspondence as published by the Russian Imperial Historical Society commences at 31 July—the earlier letters (Williams to Holderness (private and secret), 9 July) are apparently lost. Two letters from Catherine subsequent to 31 July, but not printed either in the Russian or the English edition of the correspondence, are to be found in the British Museum (Add. MSS. 6824, ff. 29, 31).

[3] Correspondence of Williams and Catherine, *passim*.

[4] Williams to Holderness, 28 September (secret/France).

good appearance but never will I answer for the success of anything at this court beforehand" [1]—a remark which one would be glad to regard as a sign that Williams was at last learning wisdom. Unfortunately the sequel prevents one from drawing this inference. Although he was informed by the Grand Duchess that the Chancellor had secured a vote of the Council in favour of giving some kind of guarantee of Hanover,[2] and though the Chancellor himself discussed the details of the proposed guarantee with him a few days later, Williams was so impatient at the inevitable delays [3] that he jumped to the conclusion that the Great Chancellor was betraying him, and, in a panic, sought to persuade the Grand Duchess to break completely with Bestuzhev and find new friends for herself and him.[4] Where the ambassador expected to find new friends it is impossible to say. Catherine's reply,[5] although sympathetic and tactful, was like a douche of cold water, and for the time being restored the ambassador to his senses; but, knowing that the Great Chancellor was being approached by France and Austria,[6] he still cherished doubts of his entire devotion to British interests,[7] believing that he intended to keep the British Government in suspense until the arrival of a French ambassador would enable Russia to name her own price for the guarantee of Hanover.[8]

Meantime, urged on by his own Government [9] and by his old enemy Frederick the Great,[10] Williams was feeling his way towards the improvement of the relations between Russia and Prussia.[11] This was obviously a delicate task, and Williams was rightly disinclined to do anything officially until Russia's attitude towards Great Britain had been definitely cleared up,[12] because

[1] Williams to Holderness, 27 July, also 7 and 17 August.
[2] Catherine to Williams, 3, 8 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 2, 19).
[3] Williams to Catherine, 6 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 16).
[4] Williams to Catherine, 9 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 23).
[5] Catherine to Williams, 9 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 25–6).
[6] Williams to Holderness, 9 July (private and secret).
[7] Williams to Holderness, 17 August.
[8] Williams to Holderness, 4 and 7 September.
[9] Holderness to Mitchell, 13 July, S.P.F., Prussia ; *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 414–5.
[10] Mitchell to Williams, 30 July, in Add. MSS. 6804, f. 72b ; Mitchell to Holderness, 30 August, S.P.F., Prussia, 66.
[11] Williams to Holderness, 7, 10 August. Newcastle had already spoken on this subject to Galitzin.
[12] Williams to Catherine, 13 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 40).

the French and Austrians at this court make all their push against the King of Prussia and endeavour to blend the King's affairs with those of His Prussian Majesty in order to make the Empress still more cold in our interest and with these insinuations they have done us the most harm at this court.[1]

When he privately invited the Great Chancellor to assist in restoring normal diplomatic relations between Russia and Prussia the Great Chancellor, in spite of his eagerness to accept the proffered bribe, was held back "by some higher power," [2] and refused to do anything until the Vice-Chancellor had been won over. At this stage Williams was tardily informed by Mitchell of Frederick's resolution to forestall his enemies.[3] He at once wrote to Mitchell [4] warning him that a Prussian offensive would have fatal consequences to the interests of Britain and Prussia at Petersburg, since it would automatically end the irresolution of the Empress. Quite apart from her desire to reduce Frederick's power, an attack on Austria would bring into operation the fourth secret article of the Treaty of the Two Empresses, which bound Russia to assist Austria if attacked by Prussia and not to lay down her arms till Maria Theresa had recovered Silesia and Glatz. In the hope of inducing Prussia to remain quiet Williams added emphatic assurances, which can hardly be justified, that Russia would remain neutral if Austria attacked Prussia. Warning and assurances were alike too late, since the Prussian army was in Saxony a fortnight before Williams's letter arrived at Berlin. Even had it arrived in time it would not have turned Frederick II from his purpose, since, as the next chapter will show, prophets in much higher repute at Berlin had already warned him in vain.

[1] Williams to Holderness, 17 August.
[2] Williams to Catherine, 10 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 30).
[3] Mitchell to Williams, 19 August, in Add. MSS. 6804, f. 105b ; Williams to Holderness, 4 September.
[4] Williams to Mitchell, 4 September, in Add. MSS. 6824, f. 15.

CHAPTER XIII

EUROPE: OUTBREAK OF THE SEVEN YEARS WAR
(JUNE–OCTOBER 1756)

Russian military preparations alarm Frederick—Relations of Britain and Prussia—Frederick insists that Russia and Austria will attack him in the spring of 1757 and makes preparations for war—Against the advice of Finckenstein and Podewils he determines to anticipate his enemies—Britain in vain begs Frederick not to take the offensive—Attitude of France to the prospect of Continental war—Progress of the negotiations between France and Austria—France warns Prussia to remain quiet—Frederick invades Saxony and drives France into the arms of Austria and Russia—George II wishes to disavow Prussian action and obtain neutrality for Hanover, but is prevented by his Cabinet—Frederick's guiding motives.

JUST as Russia's conclusion of the subsidy treaty with Britain had been the immediate cause of the Diplomatic Revolution, so the anti-Prussian resolutions of the Russian Councils of March and April 1756 and the consequent military preparations of May and June led directly to the outbreak of the Seven Years War, since they were the main factor which determined Frederick the Great to take the offensive. The gradual growth of this determination can be clearly traced in the twelfth and thirteenth volumes of his political correspondence.[1]

The British Government, after following a "policy of deception or optimism" [2] for over three months, chose a singularly inauspicious moment to inform Frederick frankly of the differences between themselves and Russia. Had they told Frederick the truth at the beginning the shock would not have been so great; had they waited another ten days Mitchell would have been able to accompany the communication with assurances that things were improving at Petersburg. When Mitchell handed to Frederick the Russian *déclaration secrétissime*

> he read [it] over unmoved and observed with great calmness that it made our treaty with Russia quite useless: that as to himself he

[1] His motives have been subjected to the most minute analysis with the most divergent results by German historians, following on the publication in 1894 of Lehmann's *Friedrich der Grosse und der Ursprung des Siebenjährigen Krieges.*

[2] Tuttle, ii, 279.

> wondered why the Empress of Russia had so strong an aversion to him: that he had never done anything to deserve it [and] that he imputed it to the influence and arts of the Court of Vienna.[1]

Frederick's worst suspicions of Russia, and particularly of the motive of the Russian military preparations, were thus confirmed.[2] In this frame of mind he accepted uncritically [3] the rumours that Austria and Russia had decided to attack him in the spring of 1757. The chief source of this story is not, as is usually assumed, the despatches copied by Frederick's spy, Menzel, in the Saxon archives, but the despatches of Swart,[4] the Dutch envoy at Petersburg, who was closely associated with Bestuzhev and may quite possibly have written these despatches as part of Bestuzhev's anti-Prussian intrigues in order to alarm Frederick and provoke him to take the offensive. When Frederick failed to find confirmation of this story in the Dresden archives he attributed his failure to the deception of Saxony by the two imperial courts,[5] and was, to quote his own words, none the less determined *prevenire quam preveniri*.[6] He had immediately replied to the Russian demonstrations in Livonia by counter-preparations in East Prussia, and soon followed these up by preparations against Austria, because he was determined to deal with the Austrians first if the Russians, for whose generalship and equipment he had a colossal contempt, attacked him.[7]

It was in vain that his two ministers of State severally protested against the hasty actions of their King. Finckenstein, a former envoy to the Russian court, pointed out that Bestuzhev was so superior to Voronzov in ability, faculty for intrigue, and knowledge of affairs that he (Finckenstein) would never despair of Bestuzhev's recovery of his supremacy until he was actually dismissed from office; if resolutely supported by British money Bestuzhev might utterly defeat his enemies, and then, urged on by his vindictive spite, strive with as much zeal as he had formerly shown to alienate Russia from Prussia to effect their

[1] Mitchell to Holderness, 9 July, in Add. MSS. 32866, f. 80.
[2] *Mémoire Raisonné*, enclosed in Mitchell's letter to Holderness of 9 July; also *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 441, 474; xiii, 65–6.
[3] *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 117.
[4] *Ibid.*, 95, 114–6.
[5] *Ibid.*, 153.
[6] *Ibid.*, 113.
[7] Mitchell to Holderness (private and secret), 24 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 406.

reconciliation.[1] Podewils, impressed by the fact that Prussian aggression would force Russia and France to fulfil their respective engagements with Austria, "took the liberty to point out" that the evidence hitherto obtained of the plans of Austria and Russia to attack Prussia early in 1757 was quite inconclusive. He and his arguments were contemptuously dismissed by Frederick with a sneer—"Adieu, Monsieur de la timide politique."[2]

Frederick's decision to anticipate his enemies is the more inexcusable because in good time he received hints of Kaunitz's designs. Now that Prussia had set Austria the example of mobilisation and that war might break out at any moment, while the Prussian preparations were bound to offend France, Kaunitz's aim was to alarm him into taking the offensive, since at the very least this would enable Austria to claim 24,000 auxiliaries from France under the first Treaty of Versailles[3] and would almost certainly lead France to give greater assistance. Yet when Mitchell at the end of July urged this point of view upon Frederick he made no impression except to provoke an outburst of Frederick's hasty temper.[4] Mitchell reported:

> The discovery the King of Prussia has made of [Austria's] treaty with the Russians has provoked him to a great degree and his resentment will carry him every length: nothing but His Majesty's interposition could have prevented him being already in motion.[5]

Unfortunately the interposition of the British Government was of the feeblest description.[6] The King alone, actuated by jealousy of the possible aggrandisement of Prussia,[7] and by fear that Hanover would be left at the mercy of France while Prussia was engaged with the two imperial courts, wished to make a resolute attempt to restrain Frederick.[8] Owing to Frederick's reticence it was not until some time after the Prussian

[1] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 427.
[2] *Ibid.*, xiii, 105–6.
[3] *Ibid.*, xii, 469; xiii, 152, 215.
[4] Koser, i, 598–9.
[5] Mitchell to Newcastle, 30 July, in Add. MSS. 32866, f. 313; *cf.* Mitchell to Holderness, 23 July, S.P.F., Prussia, 65.
[6] Holderness to Mitchell, 13 July, 6 August; Michell's reports in *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 247–8, 311. Subsequent despatches were slightly more vigorous in tone, but arrived too late at Berlin to modify Frederick's decision.
[7] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 11 October, in Add. MSS. 32867, f. 200.
[8] Hardwicke to Newcastle, 18 July, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 208.

invasion of Saxony that the British Government was informed of the actual plan of campaign,[1] and they may therefore be absolved entirely from complicity in this criminal blunder; but they had ample warning of the projected Prussian offensive, and made no very resolute attempt to prevent it. To satisfy the conscience of his ally Frederick agreed to ask the Empress-Queen for an assurance that she did not intend to attack him—a fatuous proceeding which played into the hands of Kaunitz. But he refused to make any substantial alteration of his plans, and when Mitchell urged that British influence at Petersburg was reviving he argued that though Bestuzhev might quite probably prevent Russia's accession to the first Treaty of Versailles, this would not prevent the launching of an Austro-Russian attack against Prussia in 1757.[2] On this fundamental point Frederick's declarations are in manifest contradiction to his subsequent acts, since he behaved for months after the invasion of Saxony as if he believed it was still possible for British influence to prevent Russia co-operating against him as a principal, even perhaps as an auxiliary. If Frederick believed that British influence after his ruthless behaviour in Saxony might still secure Russian neutrality, how much greater would the chance of success have been had Frederick remained on the defensive?

The remaining factor which must be examined in an analysis of the European situation in the summer of 1756 is the attitude of France after the conclusion of the first Treaty of Versailles to the prospect of a Continental war. At the court of Versailles the Pompadour influence, which was in the ascendant at the beginning of 1756,[3] certainly did not diminish during the summer of that year. The Pompadour's enthusiasm for the Austrian alliance was due chiefly to her desire to avoid a Continental war, which would separate her from the King,[4] and might prove as disastrous to her influence and position as the Austrian succession war had proved to her predecessor. Her interests, therefore, were now opposed to the further designs of Austria, and Starhemberg automatically lost his most powerful coadjutor,

[1] Mitchell to Holderness (very secret), 30 August.
[2] *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 127, 193.
[3] *Ibid.*, xii, 140, 424; Luynes, xiv, 417; Argenson, ix, 183, 195–6.
[4] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 424; Argenson, ix, 186.

although she remained on excellent terms with him and gave him general assurances of her desire to maintain and strengthen the Franco-Austrian alliance. According to Starhemberg's own despatches,[1] he could expect no support from the Council. Argenson, the War Minister and the ablest and most experienced member of the Council, was resolutely Prussophil; Rouillé, the Foreign Minister, was timid and irresolute, but anxious to avoid a breach with Prussia, and inclined, therefore, to find objections to the Austrian alliance; Machault, Minister of Marine, a *protégé* of the Pompadour, and the enemy of Argenson, and therefore at first favourably disposed to the Austrian alliance, was now inclined to join Rouillé and make difficulties, chiefly because a Continental war would fatally hamper his ambitious naval plans;[2] while little assistance could be expected from the fourth member, Saint Florentin. Even the defensive alliance with Austria was unpopular in the country, and especially among the army officers, who were always influential at court and had spokesmen in the inner circle of Louis XV's intimates.

Moreover, the great advantage, according to Bernis,[3] which the Austrian negotiators had possessed was the threat that if France did not accept their overtures they would join the enemies of France. The first Treaty of Versailles prevented the further use of this threat, since Austria had bound herself to remain neutral in the Franco-British struggle. To use the threat now would awake in an acute form the suspicions naturally retained by France of the sincerity of her new friend and fling away the substantial gains which Austria had obtained from the first Treaty of Versailles. Kaunitz and Starhemberg, although they still, in contrast to the drifting and by no means unanimous policy of France, possessed the great advantage of a clearly defined objective, no longer held the whip hand.

There can be no doubt of the sincerity of the assurances with which Rouillé accompanied his communication of the first Treaty of Versailles to Knyphausen and other ministers, that the great aim of France in concluding the treaty had been to

[1] Cited by Waddington, *Louis XV*, 326–8.
[2] *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 61.
[3] *Mémoires*, i, 264.

preserve the peace of the Continent, which seemed to the French Government more seriously threatened than ever by British intrigues, since Britain had proved so unsuccessful at sea.[1] Continental war would involve the curtailment of French efforts against Britain.[2] Least of all would the interests of France be served by the annihilation of Prussia for which Kaunitz instructed Starhemberg to press, since this would allow Austria to recover her hegemony in Germany and gravely weaken the lesser German states, on which France depended for the maintenance of her Westphalian *rôle*.[3] That *rôle* she had expressly safeguarded in the first Treaty of Versailles, and had no intention of abandoning.

The negotiation, therefore, which followed the ratification of the first Treaty of Versailles [4] made little if any progress for two months, and the divergence of views between France and Austria became manifest. Louis XV intended to make Austria give him a substantial bribe in the Netherlands for promising merely not to assist Prussia against the two imperial courts; Austria demanded military co-operation and subsidies, insisted that Prussia must not merely be made to disgorge Silesia and Glatz, but must be partitioned, and offered in the Netherlands much less than France expected.[5]

The inclination of the French Council was at first opposed even to going as far as the King was prepared to go to meet Austria's wishes; but Frederick's restiveness, as evidenced by his threats against the senatorial party in Sweden,[6] his increasingly close relations with Britain, and finally rumours of his military preparations, caused a change in the atmosphere at the French court which was at once noted by the Swedish envoy:

> [The French Court] seem to be convinced that the Court of Vienna may with the assistance of Russia very easily execute their plans against Prussia and reduce H.P.M. within his ancient bounds again without a general war being to be apprehended on that account.

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[1] *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 133. [2] *Ibid.*, xii, 412–3; Lodge, 91.
[3] *Cf.* Lodge, 91; Waddington, *Louis XV*, 529.
[4] Details in Arneth, iv, 464–73; Waddington, *Louis XV*, 464–77. Practically the only primary authority is the Kaunitz-Starhemberg correspondence, and after their brilliant success in securing the first Treaty of Versailles they were naturally optimistic and inclined to under-estimate difficulties.
[5] Waddington, *Louis XV*, 466. [6] *Pol. Corr.*, xii, 293–4; xiii, 129.

. . . The plan of the Court of Vienna is not of a nature to be immediately carried into execution partly because of the engagements which still subsist between France and the King of Prussia, and partly because the Court of Vienna by manifesting their resolution too soon might raise doubts in H.M.C.M. of the sincerity of their pacific professions. It is probable however that the present situation of affairs will lead sooner or later to the Court of Vienna's end and they are endeavouring in the meantime by all possible ways and insinuations to increase the coolness between this court and the King of Prussia, to which his own conduct and his connecting himself more closely to England may very much contribute.[1]

Even now Starhemberg had to reject a Note containing the French proposals, which had been discussed in Council and approved by the King, on the ground that, although it accepted in principle an Austrian attack on Prussia in the belief that this would not lead to a general war, the offers of French assistance were so guarded and the rewards demanded for this derisory assistance so exorbitant that he could not submit it to his court. The contention that France had agreed, before the invasion of Saxony, to attack Prussia rests entirely on Starhemberg's report of a series of confidential and quite unofficial discussions between himself and Bernis, the leader of the Austrophil party, during the court's residence at Compiègne in August. Bernis in his *Mémoires*[2] expressly denies this, and contends that on the French side the obligations of the projected offensive alliance were intended to come into force only if Prussia had previously broken the peace of Aix. Thus the proposed accord between France and Austria would have been an exact parallel to the Treaty of the Two Empresses of 1746. It is true that Starhemberg certainly did not understand that there was this preliminary condition to the execution of the arrangements he and Bernis elaborated together in the August evenings of 1756, but this misunderstanding might easily arise in informal discussions. Even if Bernis's contention is rejected as an *ex post facto* attempt to whitewash his own character and policy there is apparently no evidence that the points of Starhemberg's programme, informally accepted by Bernis, had the approval of Louis XV, and it is clear that they had not

[1] Bunge to Höpken (intercepted), 25 June, in Add. MSS. 32865, f. 425.
[2] i, 285–7.

been sanctioned by the Council. And even if we assume that the King, who though indolent was not devoid of intelligence, and the mistress, who was well aware of what the consequences of a land war might be to her own position, had actually approved, and that the Council would not have ventured to oppose the royal will,[1] it must be pointed out that there were still some points of divergence between Starhemberg and Bernis which would certainly have postponed and might ultimately have prevented the attainment of Kaunitz's ends. Thus even the complaisant *abbé* refused to allow a French auxiliary corps to act against Prussia, although he was willing to place at the disposition of the Empress-Queen 25,000 to 30,000 German mercenaries, and in addition to pay monetary subsidies. Another point in dispute was the partial or complete repayment of these subsidies should the transfer of the Netherlands, which was conditional on Maria Theresa's recovery of Silesia and Glatz, not take place; while there was still a wide gap between the share of the Netherlands demanded by France, as distinct from the share to be assigned to Don Philip and his wife, and the share offered by Austria. Further, and this lends colour to Bernis's contention, Bernis had not yet consented to the partition of Prussia by a hostile coalition, and even Starhemberg believed that it would be impracticable to secure France's written consent, and advised Kaunitz to dispense with it, since Bernis had already promised so much that Austrian success was assured. Further, there is no evidence that France had abandoned her demand that Austria should assist her against Britain if she assisted Austria against Prussia. Finally, Starhemberg carefully concealed the fact that Russia, the third member of the proposed coalition, expected territorial aggrandisement as well as subsidies as the reward for her services, but with the resumption of diplomatic relations between Russia and France, France's discovery of this, to her, extremely unpleasant pretension, was merely a matter of time.

[1] In this very despatch of 20 August, in which Starhemberg announces with unjustified optimism the virtual conclusion of the accord Kaunitz desired with France, he admits that Rouillé's jealousy of Bernis "cause actuellement plus d'embarras et plus de confusion que jamais." (Arneth, iv, 558.) According to Argenson (ix, 306–7), at the end of July the Pompadour's influence was on the decline and Bernis had lost completely the confidence of Louis XV.

While Bernis and Starhemberg were striving to bridge the differences between France and Austria, Rouillé, alarmed by the military preparations of Prussia and Austria, was earnestly trying to avert war. Throughout 1756 Knyphausen, one of the ablest of Prussian diplomatists,[1] and on good terms with influential ministers, courtiers, and soldiers at Versailles, had sought to convince his master that the only safe policy for Prussia was to remain on the defensive, since to begin a war on the Continent would complete the alienation of France from Prussia, force France to send at least 24,000 auxiliaries to the Empress-Queen, and would probably offend France so gravely that she would enter wholeheartedly into the Austrian schemes for the partition of Prussia. When Prussian armaments became notorious the envoy's conjectures became certainties. Rouillé twice warned him that France, if Prussia attacked Austria, would assist the Empress-Queen.[2] These warnings were conveyed in a more official manner to Frederick by Valori, the French minister at Berlin, on 26 July, and repeated on 2 August.[3] Though on each occasion the warning was given in the friendliest possible manner, and was accompanied by assurances that Prussia had nothing to fear if she abstained from aggression, the intervention of France to support the advice of his own ministers and the humble entreaties of Britain had an irritating and not, as France had hoped, a calming influence on Frederick.[4]

The warning was categorical; Frederick deliberately ignored it, and seems actually to have deluded himself into the belief that France might not take up arms even in defence of Saxony,[5] against which state he had now decided to launch his first attack. This decision, due partly to Frederick's experience in the Austrian succession war of the double-dealing of Saxony, but chiefly to strategic reasons, which were indeed overwhelmingly in favour of the occupation of Saxony before attempting to conquer Bohemia, was an additional blunder. Frederick's

[1] *Cf.* Tuttle, ii, 198.
[2] *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 128–30; Bunge to Höpken, 15, 22 July (intercepted), in Add. MSS. 32866, ff. 185, 243.
[3] *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 133, 169; Valori, ii, 121–8.
[4] Mitchell to Holderness, 30 July, S.P.F., Prussia.
[5] *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 341.

unprovoked attack upon a neighbouring state seemed to justify Kaunitz's argument that Prussian aggressiveness was a standing menace to European peace, and drove France to accept Austria's scheme for the partition of Prussia.

Worse still, since the Elector of Saxony's daughter was the wife of the Dauphin, while Saxony was regarded by Russia as a client state, Frederick's invasion and brutal treatment of Saxony gave Russia and France a common grievance against him,[1] which overcame the obstacles that had hitherto retarded and might perhaps have prevented the co-operation of Russia and France. Immediately the Prussian invasion of Saxony was known at Petersburg, instructions were sent to Bektyeev to inform the French court of the indignation with which the Tsaritsa regarded Prussian treatment of the electorate. "Nous aurons," the rescript continued,

> une satisfaction particulière d'agir en cela [*i.e.*, in regard to Saxony] de concert avec Sa Majté T.C. ne doutant nullement qu'Elle n'assiste efficacement ces deux Puissances [Austria and Saxony] si injustement attaquées . . . [and will employ] toutes ses forces pour lui [Saxony] procurer une satisfaction éclatante et convenable. Que si les desseins de Sa Majesté T.C. s'accordoient en cela avec les Nôtres cela seul rendra Notre union avec Elle invariable, independamment de tout autre engagement et que d'avance Nous faisons déjà fond là dessus.[2]

France fully shared these sentiments and expressed her readiness to co-operate with Russia.[3] Frederick had hoped by a reckless *coup de main* to prevent the creation of an anti-Prussian coalition, or if, as he pretended to believe, it was already formed to dissolve it. The actual result of his action was to cement the coalition he intended to destroy.[4]

The formation of the league for the partition of Prussia does not exhaust the disastrous consequences which followed from Frederick's foolish attack on Saxony. Frederick's action was tantamount to the repudiation of the Convention of Westminster.[5] It brought about the invasion of Germany by French

[1] Lodge, 94.
[2] A.E. Russie, 51, f. 366.
[3] *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 424–5.
[4] Waddington, *Louis XV*, 527.
[5] Lodge, 95–6.

troops to fulfil France's duty as a guarantor of the Imperial Constitution, and made it impossible for Prussia, involved by Frederick in a war with the three great Powers of the Continent, to assist in the defence of Hanover. He thus risked losing the support of Britain, and for months the British decision hung in the balance. Fortunately for Frederick, Newcastle and most of his colleagues grossly overrated the strength of Prussia, and expected the assistance of 11,000 Prussian troops for the defence of Hanover [1] at a time when Prussia was at war with the whole forces of the imperial courts, backed by Saxony and by French and German auxiliary forces. Their chief fear, therefore, was that the King would disavow, if he did not actually denounce, Prussian action and throw over Prussia, "our only ally." [2]

So great was their fear that it loosened the purse-strings, and they offered, if the King, who continued "in the utmost uneasiness" at Frederick's "violent proceedings" [3] in Saxony, did not dissociate himself from Prussia, to allow him to conclude subsidy treaties with any German princelings whose troops were still available for the defence of Hanover, the whole expenses to be paid by Britain.[4] Frederick's ill-treatment of the Polish royal family greatly accentuated George II's 'uneasiness,' and even Prussian victories, which the ministers hailed with jubilation, had a double-edged effect upon the King. After the battle of Lobositz Newcastle reported to Hardwicke: [5]

> I found the King at first much pleased with this success: but in discourse many things passed which I didn't like—great apprehensions of future increase of the King of Prussia's power: expecting advantages for himself as the King of Prussia would certainly have new acquisitions from the war: and in short that things might go

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[1] Mems. for the King, dated 12 September, in Add. MSS. 32867, f. 280; Waddington, *Sept Ans*, i, 160.

[2] Newcastle to Hardwicke, 18 September, in Add. MSS. 32867, f. 317; *cf.* Hardwicke to Newcastle, 19 September, in Add. MSS. 32867, f. 339: "Your Grace judges rightly we ought to be very cautious not to disoblige the King of Prussia, the only ally from whom we can hope for any relief." *Cf.* Ruville, ii, 38–9.

[3] Holderness to Newcastle, 20 September, in Add. MSS. 32867, f. 345.

[4] Mems. for the King, dated 12 September, in Add. MSS. 32867, f. 286; Waddington, *Sept Ans*, i, 160.

[5] 11 October, in Add. MSS. 32868, f. 200, partly printed in Yorke, ii, 318.

to that degree that the King himself might call in France against the King of Prussia in the Empire.

In these circumstances the overtures of Kaunitz, who was seeking to complete the isolation of Prussia, for the neutrality of Hanover had a fascination for the King and the Hanoverian ministers. Once again the British ministers came into conflict with the King, since, glad as they would have been to get rid of the burden of defending Hanover, they knew that the conditions attached to the offer would fatally alienate the King of Prussia, "our only ally." [1] It was not until months after the invasion of Saxony that the British point of view was finally adopted by our Hanoverian King,[2] and meantime the Anglo-Prussian *entente* hung by a thread.

Frederick's action is probably to be explained by the idea that in a single campaign, before France and Russia could interfere, he might crush the forces of Saxony and of Austria and force these two irreconcilable enemies of Prussia to conclude peace. This shows an exaggerated opinion of his own ability and a serious underrating of the military strength and political resolution of his antagonists. An even more fundamental criticism of Frederick's statecraft at this crisis in his career is that he allowed himself to be carried away by military considerations [3]—particularly that Prussia was ready for war while her enemies were not, and even by academic theories—particularly that an offensive war is the only kind of war which can be profitably carried on. The pernicious influence of Winterfeldt—a typical Prussian militarist who loved war for its own sake [4]—combined with Frederick's impetuous and headstrong character, rendered fruitless the endeavours alike of his own ministers and diplomatists and of his old and new ally to convince him of his folly. He persisted in walking into the trap set for him by the greatest of eighteenth-century diplomatists—the Austrian Chancellor, Kaunitz, whose foresight, circumspection, and perseverance in the face of apparently overwhelming difficulties were at last deservedly crowned with success.

[1] Hardwicke to Newcastle, 11, 12 October, in Add. MSS. 32868, ff. 203, 221.
[2] Waddington, *Sept Ans*, i, 174–94.
[3] Waddington, *Louis XV*, 526.
[4] Tuttle, ii, 292–3.

CHAPTER XIV

PETERSBURG: RUSSIA'S DECISION (SEPTEMBER 1756–MARCH 1758)

Williams invites Russian mediation between Prussia and Austria—Rejection of his proposal—Russian indignation at Prussian treatment of Saxony—Dilatory reply of Russia to British offers to begin a fresh negotiation for Russian assistance against France—Attitude of Russia towards Britain—Change in the character of Williams's mission after the Prussian invasion of Saxony—Irresolution and declining influence of the Great Chancellor—Quarrels between him and Williams—Williams's work as a Prussian agent—Accession of Russia to the first Treaty of Versailles—Arrangements for Austro-Russian military and political co-operation against Prussia—Ministerial crisis in Britain—Williams openly champions Prussian interests at Petersburg—His second proposal for Russian mediation—Its consequences—Williams applies for his recall—Other causes of friction between Britain and Russia—Frederick urges that Williams should remain at Petersburg—Williams's last months at Petersburg—His activities at Stockholm and Copenhagen—His return to England—Arrest of Bestuzhev and submission of the Grand Duchess to the Empress—Conclusion.

THE Prussian attack on Saxony and Austria ended automatically the irresolution of the court of Petersburg. Williams was under no delusions on this point, and when he discovered [1] that his warnings to Prussia not to take the offensive would in all probability arrive too late he resolved to make use of Frederick's offer to accept Russian mediation between himself and Austria.[2] Russia's acceptance of this offer seemed to Williams to afford the last possible chance of preventing Russian support of Austria.

Needless to say this overture was contemptuously rejected by the Empress. Prussia's military preparations were already known at Petersburg,[3] as was also the second Prussian note to Austria, which openly accused Russia of having formed an offensive alliance with Austria in January 1756, and then added insult to injury by attributing the non-execution of the project to the

[1] Mitchell to Williams, 28 August, in Add. MSS. 6805, f. 9b.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 11 September.
[3] As early as 27 August there were rumours at Petersburg of a battle in Moravia between Austria and Prussia. (Catherine to Williams, 27 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 87).)

military inefficiency of Russia.[1] This naturally provoked a fresh outburst of imperial indignation, and Williams added fuel to the flames by informing the Vice-Chancellor of his opinion of what "the consequences of this war [between Austria and Prussia] might be to Russia." [2] Voronzov represented to the Empress that Williams's action was a threat to coerce her to accept the invitation to mediate lest she too should be attacked by Prussia. But these royal and ambassadorial blunders did not seriously affect the Russian decision. Klingräffen's proceedings at Vienna clearly meant war, and a war of the kind for which Kaunitz had schemed since 1753—a defensive war. Prussia was now, save for a somewhat precarious *entente* with Britain, isolated in Europe. The day of vengeance had dawned, and the two Empresses were free to execute their long-cherished plan of campaign against Prussia. Williams was therefore informed that the Empress would not mediate between Austria and Prussia, but as the quarrel was entirely begun on the Prussian side she would fulfil her engagements to the Empress-Queen.[3]

By this time it was known at Petersburg that Frederick had launched his armies not against Austria, but against Saxony, which had become under Brühl almost a client state of Russia. The Empress's indignation knew no bounds.[4] Orders were immediately given for military and naval preparations for a diversion against Prussia,[5] and the Empress even spoke of taking command in person of the Russian armies in the field.[6] Assurances were sent to Dresden and Vienna [7] that Russia would support them with all her forces.

The confusion into which Frederick's invasion of Saxony threw the Russian court delayed still further the Russian reply to the overtures Williams had made to the Chancellors at the conference of 26 July, but hardly, if at all, modified its contents.

[1] Williams to Mitchell, 7 September.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 11 September.
[3] Williams to Holderness, 18 September ; Williams to Mitchell, 18 September, in Add. MSS. 6824, f. 22 ; copy of the Russian note printed in Arneth, v, 477, n. 79.
[4] See her remarks to Esterhazy in Arneth, v. 477, n. 75.
[5] Williams to Holderness, 14 September, 28 September, and 28 September (private).
[6] Catherine to Williams, 6 September, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 121).
[7] Williams to Holderness, 21 September, 28 September ; Arneth, v, 49–51.

The Empress refused to receive the first instalment of the subsidy under the convention of September 1755,[1] which, being based on a misunderstanding between the contracting parties, had become obsolete owing to the changed condition of Europe. She did not, however, expressly denounce the treaty of subsidy, but declared that she had already sent instructions to Galitzin to negotiate with the British ministers for an additional sum to be given for forage in case the Russian troops marched to defend Hanover. If this and other points, including the renewal of the treaty of defensive alliance of 1742 and the making of a treaty between the Empress and the Elector of Hanover, were satisfactorily adjusted the Empress would accept the first instalment of subsidy. To soften the dissatisfaction of the British Government, which had declared that it would regard delay as equivalent to a refusal, the Chancellors informed Williams that they were now ready to negotiate with him the renewal of the treaty of commerce.[2] The Russian Government, therefore, using the option offered to them by Holderness and Newcastle, had chosen to negotiate at London rather than at Petersburg, chiefly no doubt to gain time; and the vagueness of Newcastle's overtures much facilitated the attainment of their aims. Despite the assurances given to Williams, Galitzin had been instructed merely to find out the details of Newcastle's scheme and report them to his court, which would then give its reply to Williams.[3]

This reply—the main lines of which had been laid down before the Russian Government anticipated an immediate outbreak of war—indicates that the Russian Government had not at that time reached a final decision between Britain and France. Their desire was obviously to spin out the negotiation until the general

[1] Williams had been very pressing that the Russian Government should receive the instalment in the belief that once this was accepted Russia would be bound to Britain; his Government disapproved of his eagerness to pay over the instalment without definite assurances that Russia accepted the British interpretation of the convention. (Holderness to Williams, 24 September, 12 November, 31 December.)

[2] Williams to Holderness, 28 September. The Russian Government was already negotiating with Douglas on commerce. (Rouillé to Douglas, 4 September, in A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 373; Williams to Holderness, 28 September (secret/France).)

[3] Mémoire, dated 1 October, of a conversation with Galitzin, in Add. MSS. 32868, f. 1; *cf.* Holderness to Williams, 31 December.

situation of Europe had become clearer.[1] The outbreak of war on the Continent, although it made little essential change in the letter of the answer, changed its spirit completely. Russia's attitude was now decided to all intents and purposes, but even now she had no desire to commit herself to French antagonism to Britain, and the Vice-Chancellor offered Williams the good offices of his court to dissuade France from attacking Hanover.[2] The Empress herself was anxious to draw a distinction between the interests of Prussia and those of Britain, and seems to have entertained the hope that Prussian frightfulness in Saxony might cause a reaction in Britain against Prussia [3] and destroy the *entente* between Britain and Prussia before it could harden into an alliance. Williams's answer to her insinuations of this possibility must, however, have dashed any hopes she may have entertained. In the new circumstances, therefore, the intention underlying the Russian reply was to annul the treaty of subsidy with the minimum of hurt to British self-esteem. This would leave her free to concentrate her forces against Prussia and to enter into subsidiary engagements with France. If possible, Russia would conciliate Britain, and at the same time secure a greater concentration of forces against Prussia [4] by dissuading France from an attack on Hanover, but she had no intention of guaranteeing Hanover from French attack if France insisted on attacking it. Thus Russia at first proposed that since France desired the exclusion of the Ottoman Porte from the Russian accession to the Treaty of Versailles, France should make a similar exception of Hanover,[5] but when France refused Russia gave way without much difficulty.

[1] The Russian Government was pressing Austria to give a definite reply to the overtures made in April. (Esterhazy's reports of 17, 26 August, in Arneth, v, 49.)

[2] Williams to Holderness, 28 September.

[3] Williams to Holderness, 2 October, reporting a conversation with the Empress.

[4] These were the underlying motives of the joint Austro-Russian attempts in 1757 to arrange for the neutrality of Hanover on conditions which varied from time to time, *e.g.*, the least offensive being that George II did not support Prussia against her enemies, and the most objectionable being that George II allowed French troops to traverse his electorate. (Williams to Holderness, 8 January ; Holderness to Williams, 15 February ; Williams to Holderness, 20 January, 8 February, 22 March ; *Pol. Corr.*, xiv, 446–7 ; Waddington, *Sept Ans*, i, 174–95.)

[5] Despatch to Douglas, 27 November, A.E. Russie, 51, f. 102.

Frederick's invasion of Saxony, since it ended the irresolution of the court of Russia, altered fundamentally the character of Williams's work at Petersburg. "The King of Prussia," Williams wrote, "has passed the Rubicon and all my business is to inform your lordship what steps this court is taking against him." [1] Henceforth his duties as British ambassador were overshadowed by his work as a Prussian spy. His main task in this new capacity was to bribe the Great Chancellor to abandon his lifelong hostility towards Prussia. Frederick sent him 100,000 crowns for this purpose,[2] along with an additional 10,000 ducats for distribution among the confidants of the Chancellor.[3] He was the less likely to be successful in this task because at the beginning of September his suspicions of Bestuzhev's secret hostility [4] and Bestuzhev's jealousy of his influence with the Grand Duchess resulted in violent altercations between them,[5] in one of which the Chancellor had actually urged Williams to ask for his recall—a material fact which Williams concealed from his own Government.

Two incidents may be mentioned in order to illustrate the increasing friction between the Great Chancellor and the British ambassador. Foreseeing the futility of the Grand Duke's protest against the exchange of ambassadors with France, Bestuzhev tried to persuade him to give way before the Empress's anger was aroused; [6] but Williams foolishly used his influence over Catherine to stiffen the Grand Duke's feeble resistance, and thus aroused, quite uselessly, the Empress's anger [7] at this attempt to oppose her wishes, not only against the Grand Duke, but against Bestuzhev and Britain. A few weeks later, when Bestuzhev found

[1] Williams to Holderness (private), 28 September.

[2] Frederick to Mitchell, 2, 4 September, in Add. MSS. 6843, ff. 15, 17; Mitchell to Williams, 4 September, in Add. MSS. 6805, f. 24.

[3] Frederick to Mitchell, 17 October, in Add. MSS. 6843, f. 33; Mitchell to Williams, 24 October, in Add. MSS. 6806, f. 11.

[4] "Il me tend des pièges sur toutes choses tous les jours," Williams wrote to Catherine (8 September, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 128)). It is clear that by this time Williams was suffering from "persecution mania." *Cf.* Poniatowski, 152, 220. His subsequent despatches show signs of incoherence, but this is largely to be explained by the extraordinarily unstable position at Petersburg. (*Cf.* Swart's despatches in *La Cour de Russie*, 83 ff.)

[5] Williams to Catherine, 6, 9 September, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 122, 137).

[6] Bestuzhev to Catherine, enclosed in Catherine's letter to Williams of 18 August, O.S.

[7] Catherine to Williams, 11 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 33–4).

it difficult to secure the return of Poniatowski to Petersburg, Williams urged Catherine to make it a test case of the Chancellor's loyalty, and strove to impress upon Catherine the contrast between his own single-hearted devotion and Bestuzhev's lukewarmness by offering, it is to be hoped for his own honour insincerely, to destroy the credit of Bestuzhev with the British Government if he did not comply with Catherine's demands.[1]

Williams, therefore, was heavily handicapped in his attempt to convert the Great Chancellor to friendship with Prussia. Again and again he broached the subject to the Chancellor, who told him quite frankly "that [Frederick's] precipitate march had not only disconcerted all his [Bestuzhev's] schemes but had thrown this court into such a rage against His Prussian Majesty that it was impossible at present to say one word in his favour."[2] Williams reports of a later more convivial meeting: "On dit que le vin fait sortir la verité; si cela est, il [Bestuzhev] est furieusement autrichien et encore plus saxon."[3] Williams, however, did not despair,[4] especially when Bestuzhev showed his fear that Frederick would make revelations of his intrigues from the Saxon archives,[5] and actually pretended that the delay in the preparations of the Russian troops was deliberately contrived by him.[6] Although the retention of Bestuzhev's services was essential to British interests, Williams failed to appreciate the decline of the Great Chancellor's influence and believed that his reconciliation with Peter Shuvalov[7]—partial and insincere as it was on both

[1] Williams to Catherine, 11 September, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 150).

[2] Williams to Holderness (private), 28 September; *cf.* Williams to Holderness, 12 October.

[3] Williams to Catherine, 1 October, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 187); *cf.* Poniatowski, 191. Bestuzhev's drunkenness was notorious. *Cf.* Boyer's despatch of 13 June, 1751, in A.E. Saxe, 41, f. 240b (quoting Brühl): ". . . Le Général Bretlach buvoit beaucoup et sans en être incommodé avec M. de Bestucheff qui ne soûtenoit pas si bien le vin et dont cet ambassadeur faisoit par cette raison ce qu'il vouloit."

[4] Williams to Mitchell, 26, 28 September, in Add. MSS. 6864, ff. 30, 31.

[5] Catherine to Williams, 23 October, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 221); Williams to Mitchell, 2 November, in Add. MSS. 6824, f. 58; Mitchell to Williams, 20 November (Newport Papers); *Pol. Corr.*, xiii, 413, 485.

[6] Williams to Holderness, 19 October.

[7] Williams to Catherine, 20 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 55–6); Williams to Catherine, 28 August, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 94). The chief motive on the Shuvalov side was apparently the idea that the Chancellor controlled the Grand Duchess. Since their attempts to reach a direct understanding with

sides—was a sign of strength,[1] not, as in fact it was, of weakness. At the moment Bestuzhev, although his influence might still revive, was not in a position to direct the march of events at Petersburg. His ascendancy over the Empress was gone, and the remnants of his influence were being rapidly destroyed by his enemies; Funcke, his confidential secretary and in some measure director, had been recalled from Petersburg; above all he had no longer the advantage over his enemies which a clearly defined 'system,' pursued even by the most tortuous methods, gives. Bestuzhev was undoubtedly tempted by the Anglo-Prussian offers of bribes and pensions, which far exceeded anything he had hitherto received, but he knew well the instability of his position and the vehemence of the Empress's hatred of Prussia, which he himself had planted in her breast and assiduously watered. Moreover, he had a genuine repugnance to abandon his lifelong hostility to Prussia, though this was weakened by the fact that he had to choose between friendship with Prussia and friendship with his other enemy, France. He drifted therefore with the torrent. "Neither he nor anyone else at this Court," he told Williams, "dared at present attempt to persuade the Empress to alter her designs." [2] Sometimes, at the instigation of Williams and the Grand Duchess, he made feeble attempts to postpone the accession of Russia to the first Treaty of Versailles and to make difficulties in the Austro-Russian negotiations for co-operation against Prussia [3]—at others, moved by a desire to retain office and its profits, he tried to conciliate the dominant Shuvalovs by submission to their wishes and to extract bribes from Austria and France by convincing them of his good intentions.[4]

Williams was more successful in his other attempts to serve his old enemy, the King of Prussia, than in his attempts to bribe

her had failed they now hoped to insure themselves against the death of the Empress by an agreement with the Chancellor. (Williams to Catherine, 9, 10 September, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 137–8, 142 ff.).)

[1] Williams to Catherine, 14 October, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 202).

[2] Williams to Holderness, 12 October. [3] Arneth, v, 67.

[4] In the middle of August he had assured Douglas that he would do his best to promote the union of Russia and France (Rouillé to Douglas, 4 September, A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 373). This was probably mere diplomatic courtesy as understood at Petersburg, but later approaches were probably more sincere (Waddington, *Sept Ans*, i, 425; Waliszewski, 425), and certainly more fruitful.

Bestuzhev. He sent full and accurate accounts of the Russian military and naval preparations; prophesied correctly that the Russian armies would not be able to enter Prussia until June 1757; and employed the Grand Duchess not only to find out from Apraksin, the commander-in-chief, the Russian plans of campaign,[1] but to try and bribe him to postpone operations against Prussia.[2] How far Catherine was successful cannot be definitely ascertained, but it is obvious that the knowledge of the sentiments of the grand ducal couple must, consciously or unconsciously, have had some influence on the actions of Apraksin. Further, Williams was on excellent terms [3] with the Grand Duke Peter, and acted as the intermediary between the King of Prussia and his "ape," [4] the Grand Duke, while it is at this period that the idea of a triple alliance of Britain, Prussia, and Russia first established itself among the political notions of the Grand Duchess,[5] and predisposed her to accept the Prussian alliance offered by Frederick the Great at the end of the Seven Years War. Frederick II was soon to give the most convincing proofs of his satisfaction with Williams's services.

While Williams was endeavouring to recover his hold over the Great Chancellor, and to use the influence of the Grand Duchess in the interests of Britain and Prussia, the first step towards the formation of the great anti-Prussian coalition had been taken at Petersburg by the accession of Russia to the first Treaty of Versailles. Urged on by Austria, Rouillé had on 14 August sent instructions to Douglas to invite, in conjunction with Esterhazy, Russia's accession.[6] The predominant faction at Petersburg after Frederick's invasion of Saxony was anxious to accept the invitation, but difficulties arose as to the conditions of the Russian accession. The initial difficulty was the Russian demand for a subsidy of five million roubles. France refused to give any subsidy at all directly to Russia. Then France was

[1] Catherine to Williams, 30 September, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 185–6).
[2] Williams to Mitchell, 20 January, in Add. MSS. 6824, f. 122.
[3] See letter from Grand Duke to Williams incorporated in Williams's letter to Holderness of 28 September (secret/France).
[4] The phrase is l'Hôpital's.
[5] Williams to Holderness (most secret), 28 September.
[6] Rouillé to Douglas, 14 August, A.E. Russie, Supplément 8, f. 345. Full powers were not sent until 4 September.

suspicious that Russia had some secret engagements with Britain, and was not convinced by mere assurances.[1] This second difficulty was, however, easily surmounted by the communication to France of a copy of the *déclaration secrétissime*.[2] A more serious obstacle was that France was extremely unwilling [3] to sacrifice her ancient allies, particularly Poland, Sweden, and Turkey, to Russia, while Kaunitz feared that the accession might enable Britain and Prussia to induce the Porte to attack the two Empresses, especially if the anti-Russian Poles formed a confederation to resist the march of the Russian troops across Poland and appealed to the Porte for assistance.[4] In the end a compromise was arranged—France, recognising the necessity for effective Russian co-operation against Prussia, gave up her opposition to the Russian violation of Polish territory [5] after receiving assurances, which were soon to prove worthless, that Russia would not abuse this right to the detriment of the liberties of Poland,[6] while she expressly preserved her ancient alliance with Turkey and insisted that any subsidy Russia received must pass through the hands of Austria. Before this solution was reached there had, however, been friction. French agents in Poland countenanced [7] if they did not actually stir up the agitation against the proposed march of Russian troops through Poland,[8] and this naturally was very badly taken at Petersburg. Still more serious, Douglas on 11 January, 1757, was induced by the two Chancellors and Esterhazy to sign the act of accession by Russia [9] with a most secret and separate clause by which, in the event of war between Turkey and Russia, France would give no assistance to Turkey beyond the payment

[1] Douglas to Tercier, 26 May/5 June, in A.E. Russie, Supplément 8.

[2] A.E. Russie, Supplément 9, f. 79.

[3] See Broglie's instructions of 25 April, 1757, in Farges, ii, 190–3. *Cf.* Waddington, *Sept Ans*, i, 112.

[4] Arneth, v, 55.

[5] Despatch of 20 November to Douglas in A.E. Russie, 51, f. 91.

[6] Rescript to Bektyeev, 30 September, O.S., in A.E. Russie, 51, f. 32.

[7] Broglie, *Secret du Roi*, i, 150–1, 224; Waddington, *Sept Ans*, i, 113, 116–7; Broglie apparently warned the Poles of the uselessness of resisting the Russians; his colleague Durand tried to organise opposition to the Russian march. (Ilchester and Langford Brooke, *Correspondence of Catherine* (translated), 154, 157–8.)

[8] Williams to Holderness, 9, 16 October, A.E. Russie, Suppléments 8, ff. 394 and 419 (Rouillé to Douglas, 17 October), and 9, f. 8 (Douglas to Rouillé, 9 November).

[9] Printed in Martens, i, 191–201.

of subsidies. The French Government absolutely refused to accept this clause, and severely censured Douglas.[1] Louis XV in a personal letter to the Empress appealed to her not to insist on the clause, and the Empress then gave way.[2] The union of the three Great Powers of Europe was now an accomplished fact, although there was as yet no offensive treaty against Prussia.

Simultaneously with this negotiation, however, Russia and Austria had been arranging the political and military conditions of their co-operation against Prussia. The chief obstacle to agreement here was at first Russia's insistence upon territorial aggrandisement. She renewed the demand made for the first time in accordance with the resolutions of the council of 25 March, 1755, that the kingdom of Prussia (*i.e.*, the detached fragment of Hohenzollern territory forming an enclave in Poland and sometimes called East Prussia) should be restored to Poland, and that Poland should in exchange surrender the duchy of Courland to Russia. Austria was extremely unwilling to permit the westward extension of the Russian frontiers. She feared the growing influence of the House of Romanov in the Empire, and suspected that Russia, aggressive and, owing to her enormous extent of territories, invulnerable, would prove an uncomfortable neighbour to herself. Further, at this particular time Austria had a special reason for rejecting Russian schemes of expansion, because they would alarm France, still in her heart unswervingly opposed to any strengthening of Russia which would endanger her client states in Eastern Europe, and might induce her to withdraw altogether from the coalition.[3] Finally, if betrayed to Turkey, Russia's schemes would intensify the alarm of the Porte and of the Polish 'patriots' at the Franco-Austro-Russian alliance, and might easily provoke the outbreak of a war in South-eastern Europe, which would fatally hamper the Austro-Russian campaign against Prussia.

In spite of all these objections to the Russian demands, Kaunitz dared not reject them, since Russian co-operation was essential. He was prepared to accept a compromise (to be kept

[1] Waddington, *Sept Ans*, i, 121–2.
[2] Vandal, *Louis XV et Elizabeth*, 277 ; Rambaud, ii, 29–30.
[3] Arneth, v, 69 and notes.

secret from France) by which the duchy of Courland, while remaining in theory a fief of Poland, would be added to the Russian Empire, while the kingdom of Prussia would be restored to its feudal dependence on Poland, but would become a secundogeniture of the House of Habsburg.[1] Before these instructions, after a delay of over seven months from the date of the original Russian proposals,[2] arrived at Petersburg the Russian ministers, abandoning their attempts to secure subsidies directly from France, had changed their batteries. At first they had actually refused to take subsidies from Austria, partly because they underestimated Russia's financial weakness, but chiefly because they were jealous of the intimacy of Austria and France [3] and believed that to accept subsidies from Austria would reduce still further Russia's share in directing the forces of the coalition and weaken her claim to territorial rewards for her exertions. They now treated the prospect of Russian territorial expansion as of minor importance and pointed out that these gains were conditional on success against Prussia. Esterhazy was instructed, if possible, to compel Russia to choose between the subsidy and the conditional promise of Courland. This at first proved impossible, but he was able, owing to the complaisance of his court in regard to Courland, to reduce the pecuniary demands of Russia to an annual subsidy of one million roubles—a much smaller sum than Kaunitz had dared to hope—and a convention on these lines was signed at Petersburg on 2 February,[4] which bound the contracting parties to wage war against Prussia with at least 80,000 regular troops each, not to treat separately with the common enemy, and not to lay down their arms until Maria Theresa had recovered Silesia and Glatz. France, Sweden, and Denmark were to be invited to accede to the treaty, and the partition of Prussia, laid down as a principle in the treaty, was to be settled in detail by a subsequent convention between the contracting parties, the acceding Powers, and the King of Poland. The separate and secret declaration [5] by which Austria promised to obtain the duchy of Courland or some equivalent reward for Russia on the

[1] Arneth, v, 57–61. [2] *Ibid.*, v, 57.
[3] Williams to Holderness, 12, 16 October ; Waliszewski, 425.
[4] Printed in Martens, i, 201–12. [5] Printed in Arneth, v, 480, n. 98.

conclusion of peace was annulled on the exchange of ratifications. Elizabeth allowed herself to be convinced that the declaration by alienating France would certainly weaken and might even break up the anti-Prussian coalition, and accepted in its place an entirely informal promise that Austria as a loyal ally on all occasions would advance the interests of the Russian Empire.

Thus the negotiation of Russia's accession to the first Treaty of Versailles and the arrangement of Austro-Russian action had been successfully accomplished in each case by a surrender on the part of the Empress of Russia.[1] Nothing can show more clearly her frantic indignation at the Prussian invasion of Saxony, which had turned her former hostility to Prussia into an overmastering passion which directed her actions until the day of her death.

While the anti-Prussian coalition was being formed at Petersburg Britain had been in the throes of a ministerial crisis. Fox, who had never been comfortable in the Newcastle cabinet [2] and feared to be involved in its unpopularity after the loss of Minorca, accused Newcastle of not observing the conditions on which he had consented to enter the Cabinet, and announced to the King on 15 October his intention of resigning.[3] Pitt refused absolutely to act with Newcastle,[4] and an acute ministerial crisis followed, which ended in the middle of November with the formation of the Pitt-Devonshire cabinet, in which Holderness, at the express desire of the King,[5] remained as Secretary for the Northern Department, while Pitt took the Southern Department and supreme control. The new Ministry had neither internal cohesion nor a working majority.[6] It adopted in the main the foreign policy of its predecessor,[7] against which its leading member had inveighed in order to create confusion and force

[1] Lavish bribery of the Russian ministers had even now been found necessary by Austria and France to secure the speedy conclusion of their negotiations at Petersburg (Williams to Holderness, 30 November ; *Pol. Corr.*, xiv, 184).

[2] Yorke, ii, chapter xxiii : Illustrative Correspondence ; *Archives*, iii, 220 ; Ruville, ii, 51–3. See also details of a dispute between Fox and his colleagues in Add. MSS. 32866, ff. 208, 217, 219.

[3] Yorke, ii, 275, 319.

[4] Yorke, ii, 326 ; Williams, *Pitt*, 283.

[5] Ruville, ii, 60, 62.

[6] H. Fox to Williams, 26 December, in Stowe MSS. 263.

[7] Ruville, ii, 54, 89–94.

his way to office and power. It was, however, too weak and too much occupied with domestic intrigues and preparations for the maritime and colonial war to arrange for effective co-operation with Prussia—still less to make any real impression on the anti-Prussian sentiments of the King, who disliked its leading member, and was therefore not inclined to listen to its advice. Holderness spoke the truth when he told Newcastle at the very end of 1756:

> It is but too true my lord that *nothing is done* and that much precious time is lost. . . . I found H.M. more perplexed and less resolved what to do than when I saw him last, but less willing than ever to enter roundly into measures with the King of Prussia . . . the pusillanimity of the Hanoverian regency [over Austrian and Russian proposals of neutrality for Hanover] has made a great impression this last fortnight.[1]

During this period of uncertainty Williams was left at Petersburg practically without instructions from his Government.[2] He had, however, no hesitation in following a line of his own. Before the ministerial crisis became acute he had received despatches instructing him to point out to the Russian ministers that Prussia in attacking Saxony was really acting on the defensive.[3] Williams in his new-found zeal for the King of Prussia went far beyond this. Unfortunately for himself, he failed to realise the strength of the Empress's indignation against Prussia, and believed that when she discovered the difficulties and expense of moving her troops her crusading zeal would cool rapidly—especially if in the meantime Prussia won one or two striking victories at the expense of the Saxons and Austrians.[4]

[1] Holderness to Newcastle, 29 December, in Add. MSS. 32869, f. 422. *Cf.* Newcastle to Hardwicke, 4 January, 1757, in Yorke, ii, 380. See on the negotiation for the neutrality of Hanover, *supra*, Chapter XIII, p. 265, and Chapter XIV, p. 269, n. 4.

[2] Williams to Mitchell, 4 January, 1757, in Add. MSS. 6864, f. 108.

[3] Holderness to Williams, 8 August.

[4] " Depend upon it, my lord, the tone of this court is quite changed since the news of the King of Prussia's victory [at Lobositz]." (Williams to Holderness, 19 October ; *cf.* Williams to Holderness, 30 October.) The Great Chancellor, possibly with the treacherous idea of getting rid of his rival in the favour of the Grand Duchess, encouraged Williams in his opinion, saying that the only way to procure peace was for Prussia to win " a new and complete victory over the Austrian forces." (Williams to Holderness, 30 October ; *cf.* Williams to Mitchell, 28 September, in Add. MSS. 6824, f. 31.)

Exaggerating the influence of the Great Chancellor [1] and the effect of Frederick's offers of money on him, Williams became openly the champion of Prussia at the court of Petersburg, defended Frederick's indefensible proceedings in Saxony, rejoiced at his victories, grossly exaggerated their importance, and expressed the opinion that Austria would soon be forced to make a separate peace, which would leave Russia face to face with the redoubtable armies of Prussia, flushed with triumph over the Austrians and Saxons [2] and led by the outstanding military genius of the age. This identification of the interests of Britain and Prussia at a court notoriously hostile to Prussia was a gross blunder, and is the less defensible since Williams had clearly pointed out to Holderness, immediately after the Prussian invasion of Saxony, the danger of the course which he himself subsequently pursued, and had emphasised the necessity of maintaining in public an "exact neutrality." [3] Naturally the Austro-French party at Petersburg made the best use of Williams's indiscretions to arouse the Empress's hostility to Williams himself as well as to the British Government.[4] They had an additional weapon in Williams's intimacy with the grand ducal couple, and with substantial accuracy attributed to his influence over them the opposition of the Grand Duke to various measures which lay close to the Empress's heart.[5]

On 8 November Williams found an unexpected opportunity of putting his theories to the test. On going to pay a call he found the Empress's coaches at the door. Before he could get away a messenger summoned him to return to the house, where he had a lengthy conversation with the Empress and also with the favourite. In these conversations [6] Williams walked blindly into the trap. He reproduced his stock defence of Prussian

[1] Williams to Catherine, 27 September, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 181); Williams to Mitchell, 16 October, in Add. MSS. 6824, f. 46, and 23 October, *ibid.*, f. 53.

[2] Williams to Holderness, 2 November.

[3] Williams to Holderness, 18 September.

[4] Williams to Holderness, 23 October.

[5] The Empress was so annoyed at this opposition that the Grand Duke was henceforth excluded from the Council. (Catherine to Williams, 5 November, O.S.; Williams to Holderness, 9 December.)

[6] Very full accounts in Williams's letter to Catherine of 27 October, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 233); Williams to Holderness, 9 November.

aggression, spoke of "the gentle and generous manner" in which Frederick had treated the electorate of Saxony, and then, encouraged by the apparently favourable reception of what he had said, he renewed the proposal for Russian mediation jointly with Great Britain between Austria and Prussia, which had already been decisively rejected. Finally, he pressed home his proposal by extolling the superiority of Prussian troops, pointing out that Austria would probably be forced to make a separate peace, which would have serious consequences for Russia.[1] Williams followed up this step by talking in the same strain to both Chancellors. "I have," he reported, "flattered their vanity with the great figure H.I.M. might make as mediatrix in conjunction with the King; and sufficiently alarmed their fears with the terror of the Prussian arms." [2] They severally declared that they would propose the mediation to the Empress, and promised to support the proposition with all their power.[3] The insincerity of the Vice-Chancellor at least ought to have been patent to Williams, since he overacted his part so far as to inquire whether, "in case the Empress accepted the mediation," Williams would write "to His Prussian Majesty's Commander-in-Chief in Prussia to prevent his coming forward with his army."

Obviously, the whole incident was due originally to the Empress's desire to see for herself how far Williams would go in advocacy of Prussian views, and was then exploited by the Shuvalovs to draw Williams still further into the trap by renewing officially the proposal for Russian mediation. For a few days Williams deluded himself in the idea that his proposal would certainly be accepted,[4] and justified Frederick's conduct everywhere. He had lost sight entirely of the realities of the situation at Petersburg. He believed that Russia would not only accept the task of mediation, but would refuse to accede to the first Treaty of Versailles,[5] and told the Grand Duchess that if the Great Chancellor would not support him "je romps en visière avec lui, et je pousserai mon jeu ailleurs." [6] For

[1] Williams to Holderness, 9 November.
[2] Williams to Holderness, 13 November.
[3] Williams to Holderness, 13 November.
[4] Williams to Mitchell, 16 November, in Add. MSS. 6824, f. 62.
[5] Williams to Catherine, 1 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 237).
[6] Williams to Catherine, 27 October, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 233).

the second time he had been gulled by the Shuvalovs and the Vice-Chancellor. From his day-dreams he was rudely awakened when he heard that the Empress publicly censured his conduct,[1] saying that he had become a Prussian and meddled too much in the King of Prussia's affairs. The Shuvalovs and Voronzov at once threw off the mask.

Williams attributes the changed attitude of the Russian court to the news of the King of Prussia's troops retiring from Bohemia and going into winter quarters, "which is," he reports, "looked upon as a sort of defeat to the King of Prussia." [2] He refused in his despatches to admit that he had been duped by the anti-British party at Petersburg, and tried to persuade his Government that the step which he had taken would have been a brilliant success but for circumstances beyond his control. He could not, however, conceal from himself that his support of Prussian interests in season and out of season, culminating in this rash step, had compromised his position at Petersburg.[3] In future he was resolved to keep quiet and meddle as little as possible, at least till he received fresh orders from London.[4]

Williams's mortification was increased when he received—with unwonted celerity—a formal Note [5] containing the Russian reply to his overture. This document, drawn up in the strongest language consistent with diplomatic terminology, expressed astonishment that, after the decided negative which he had received on his first proposal of Russian mediation, Williams should have repeated the overture and should actually have tried to coerce Russia to accept it by threats that Prussia would attack Russia if Russia persisted in her refusal to mediate.[6] The tone of this note, and its communication with a still more

[1] Catherine to Williams, 4 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 243).

[2] Williams to Holderness, 16, 23 November; Williams to Catherine, 5 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 250).

[3] Douglas to Tercier, 27 November, A.E. Russie, 51, f. 106.

[4] Williams to Holderness, 16 November.

[5] Dated 23 November, O.S. (appended to Williams's despatch to Holderness of 1 December and printed almost in full in Martens, i, 208).

[6] Williams denied (to Holderness, 9 December) that he had ever even thought of using threats, but this is contradicted by the language of his own earlier despatches. *Cf.* Williams to Catherine, 1 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 236).

offensive commentary to all Russian foreign ministers,[1] confirmed by information he received from the Grand Duchess of the personal feelings of the Empress towards him, convinced him that the Russian Government would soon demand his recall.[2] To anticipate this demand Williams himself asked to be recalled [3] on the ground of bad health. This was no mere pretext.[4] For weeks together he had been unable to leave his room; his despatches had become meagre and self-contradictory; the refusal of his second proposal of mediation and the manner of it brought on a complete breakdown, and, according to his own account, he was now "almost incapable of writing or reading."

In addition to the displeasure of the Empress and the state of his health Williams had another reason for insisting upon his recall, since even the Grand Duchess had found it impossible to keep the peace between the Chancellor and him. Williams, on insufficient grounds, blamed the Chancellor for arousing the Empress's hostility to him,[5] while Bestuzhev complained to Catherine that Williams was his enemy [6]—as, indeed, he was, since more than once he had urged upon Catherine the suicidal policy of throwing over the Great Chancellor and trusting herself entirely to the Shuvalovs.[7] Fortunately, before he could push Catherine far along this perilous course, the Russian reply to his second mediation proposal convinced him that he had once again been the dupe of the Shuvalovs.[8] Characteristically Williams sought to take a personal revenge upon the Great Chancellor for the real or imagined injuries Bestuzhev had inflicted upon him; once again Catherine proved his guardian angel, and persuaded him to give up futile intrigues,[9] which could only have recoiled on his own head and might have produced a complete rupture between Britain and Russia.

[1] Copy in A.E. Russie, 51, f. 96.
[2] Williams to Catherine, 10 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 258).
[3] Williams to Holderness (private), 9 December.
[4] Williams to Holderness (private), 6 July; Williams to Catherine, 10 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 258), 26 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 287).
[5] Williams to Catherine, 5, 6 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 250–1).
[6] Catherine to Williams, 7 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 253).
[7] Williams to Catherine, 10 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 258–9)
[8] Williams to Catherine, 23 November, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 284).
[9] Catherine to Williams, 8 January, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 315).

Suspect to the Empress, hated by the Great Chancellor, despised by the Shuvalovs, who advised the Empress to treat him "more as a Prussian spy than an English ambassador," [1] and mocked at even by the timid and double-faced Vice-Chancellor, it was indeed time for Williams to leave Petersburg. He consoled himself for his failure with the reflection that once Catherine was on the throne she would at once recall him to Petersburg,[2] where he would reign, according to Catherine's promise, as "virtual viceroy of Russia."

His request to be recalled was immediately granted by his Government,[3] and he was instructed,[4] though without any censure of his recent conduct, to avoid entering upon business in his audience of leave with the Empress, so as not to indispose her still further against Britain by a parade of his admiration for Prussia. The British Ministry had at last realised that the most they could expect from Russia, if they insisted upon supporting Frederick II, was bare neutrality so far as Britain was concerned. Apart from the odium incurred by Britain as the accomplice of Prussia, and increased by Williams's injudicious conduct, difficulties had already arisen between Britain and Russia over Britain's use of her sea power to prevent contraband being imported into France. This was the more serious because Peter Shuvalov and the Vice-Chancellor were both personally interested in this trade, and "their notions here are so wild about the laws of commerce that they think that any goods that belong to Russia, though taken on board a French ship, ought immediately to be released." [5] And the danger of a conflict was the greater because the treaty of commerce between Britain and Russia, which had to some extent regulated this and other disputed points of maritime law, was about to expire; and the Russian Government, presumably in order to keep their hands free to assert their 'wild' notions of maritime law, by repeated delays practically refused to renew it. The Great Chancellor still made feeble efforts to improve Russia's relations with Britain, but he had become a mere

[1] Williams to Catherine, 22 December, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 305).
[2] Williams to Catherine, 11 December, O.S. (Goriaïnow, 298).
[3] Holderness to Williams, 14 January.
[4] Holderness to Williams, 25 January.
[5] Williams to Holderness, 26 October; *Archives*, iii, 225–6.

figurehead, without either the power or the will to oppose the dictates of the Shuvalovs, who retaliated upon George II for Britain's interference with their lucrative trade with France by refusing to allow the export of grain from the Baltic provinces to Hanover.[1] The Empress's hostility to Prussia increased rather than diminished, and so eager was she to see her troops in action that in February she sent orders to Apraksin to march at once, no matter how defective his preparations were, and freed him from responsibility for any disaster which might happen owing to his obedience to her orders.[2] Since the Empress was in this mood, the passage of the King's speech at the opening of Parliament in which Britain's determination to assist her "good ally" Prussia against the coalition was stated aroused considerable resentment at Petersburg, especially as the earlier indecision of the British Government on this point had not escaped Galitzin's notice and had perhaps raised hopes at Petersburg. When Galitzin reported that British support of Prussia would take the form of a British squadron in the Baltic for the defence of the Prussian coast and British trade,[3] Russia's indignation was acute; and the Russian Government retorted by declaring a blockade of the Prussian coast.[4] Had the British Government carried out their intention an open breach between Britain and Russia could hardly have been averted, and the realisation of this fact, along with the demands of the colonial and maritime war, caused the British Government to drop the scheme in spite of the protests of their ally Frederick, and to deny that it had ever been considered.[5]

[1] Holderness to Williams, 10 December, 1756; Williams to Holderness, 25 January, 1757.

[2] Williams to Holderness, 8, 19 February, 1757; Yorke to Hardwicke, 4 February, in Add. MSS. 35357, f. 94; *Pol. Corr.*, xiv, 244.

[3] Williams to Holderness, 26 March. This idea was originally proposed by Newcastle as a means of recovering Russia (*supra*, Chapter XII, p. 239), and was at first not pressed by Frederick, "who did not wish to be a burden to his allies." (Mitchell to Holderness, 9 July, in Add. MSS. 32866, f. 80.) After Russia had certainly been lost Frederick renewed the scheme, and pressed it very strongly upon the British Government. (Frederick to Mitchell, 20 February, 7 April, in Add. MSS. 6843, ff. 80, 88; *Pol. Corr.*, xiv, 239, 297, 446, 502.) The British Government's virtual refusal caused considerable resentment at Berlin. (Mem^{ds}., 15 July, in Add. MSS. 32872, f. 204; Holderness to Mitchell (most secret), 17 July, *ibid.*, f. 232; Mitchell to Holderness (most secret), *ibid.*, f. 322.)

[4] Williams to Holderness, 10, 24 May.

[5] Holderness to Mitchell, 5 July.

When Frederick learned from Mitchell that the British Government had recalled Williams from Petersburg he induced Mitchell to send back the messenger to London with a request that Williams should be urged to remain at his post [1] in order not merely to continue his reports of Russian military preparations and plans and to delay the march of the Russian troops, if this were possible,[2] but to advise the grand ducal couple, and to act as intermediary between them and Frederick.[3] The health of the Empress [4] was increasingly precarious; the end, it was generally believed, could not be long delayed; and Frederick desired Williams to be on the spot to assist the grand ducal couple to seat themselves on the throne and gain the maximum advantage for British and Prussian interests, or, should the Empress survive, to take advantage of any revulsion of feeling at Petersburg caused by Prussian victories. The British Government readily complied with the request of their ally, and asked Williams to remain at Petersburg if he could possibly stay there without ruining completely his constitution.[5]

Apart from an improvement in his health, all the reasons which had led him to ask for his recall still existed. Even the Grand Duchess advised him, in his own interests as well as in those of his court, to leave Petersburg at least for some months,[6] while his friends at home urged him in view of his health to return to England at once, even if the Empress were on the point of death.[7] Williams, therefore, advised his Government to allow him to leave Petersburg, assuring them that his successor would have the assistance and full confidence of the Grand Duchess. If, however, they still wished him to remain as a minister to the Government *in posse*, rather than to the

[1] Frederick to Mitchell, 5 February, in Add. MSS. 6843, f. 65 ; *Pol. Corr.*, xiv, 247 ; Mitchell to Holderness, 8 February, S.P.F., Prussia.

[2] Mitchell to Williams, 18, 26 December, 1756, 8 January, 1757, in Add. MSS. 6806, ff. 51b, 60b, 67 ; *Pol. Corr.*, xiv, 166, 225.

[3] Mitchell to Williams, 18, 26 December, 1756, 8 January, 1757, in Add. MSS. 6806, ff. 51b, 60b, 67 ; *Pol. Corr.*, xiv, 80, 149–50, 165–6, 225.

[4] Williams to Holderness, 28 September (private), 30 October, 9 December (secret) ; Catherine to Williams, 30 September, 4, 15, 17 October, 10 December, all O.S. (Goriaïnow, 185, 191, 204, 209–10, 297).

[5] Holderness to Williams, 22 February ; Holderness to Williams (private), 22 February (Newport Papers).

[6] Williams to Holderness, 22 March, and 22 March (most secret).

[7] Fox to Williams, 26 December, 1756, in Stowe MSS. 263.

Government *in esse*, he begged them to give him as little business as possible to transact with the latter, since he believed he would be sure to receive either a refusal or no answer at all. The soundness of this opinion was proved shortly afterwards when the Russian ministers ignored Williams and made proposals to Wolff for the renewal of the Anglo-Russian treaty of commerce.[1]

Williams's despatch did not reach London until after the King, by dismissing Pitt on 6 April,[2] had caused a complete paralysis of the Government at the moment when immediate and resolute action was essential for the defence of Hanover and the establishment of the Anglo-Prussian alliance on a firm basis. Not until 29 June was the new Ministry—the famous Pitt-Newcastle administration—formed,[3] just in time to hear of the defeat of the Prussians at Kolin [4] on 18 June and to assume responsibility for the ominous retreat of the Duke of Cumberland and his composite army, which began in June and terminated on 8 September with the disastrous capitulation of Kloster Zeven. The Cabinet crisis caused delay in the final decision of the British Government on the Petersburg Embassy, and it was not until 5 July that Williams received leave to return to England.[5]

The last months of his residence at Petersburg proved extremely disagreeable. One by one Britain's remaining friends at Petersburg fell away from the discredited ambassador. The Great Chancellor, overrating his ability and his prestige, tried to carry on two inconsistent policies. In spite of his professions to Austrian and French [6] diplomatists he remained hostile to the French alliance [7] effected by the Shuvalovs. But all Williams's attempts to induce him by lavish bribes to support the interests of Prussia [8] failed. Bestuzhev now sought to

[1] Wolff to Holderness, 15 March, O.S.; Williams to Holderness, 26 March, 9 April.

[2] The King's motives are analysed in Williams, *Pitt*, i, 310–1; Ruville, ii, 108–9.

[3] Williams, *Pitt*, i, 321–3.

[4] *Ibid.*, 337.

[5] Holderness to Williams, 31 May.

[6] Douglas to Rouillé, 29 March, 1757, in A.E. Russie.

[7] Williams to Holderness, 30 August, 1756, 22 March, 1757; Yorke to Holderness (private), 31 May, 1757, in Add. MSS. 35436, f. 144.

[8] Williams to Holderness, 13 June; Williams to Cumberland, 14 June, 1757, in Newport Papers.

regain the favour of the Empress by vigorously pushing on the war against Prussia,[1] with the idea that so long as the war lasted he was indispensable. Once Prussia was crushed Bestuzhev hoped to restore the old system of Europe in its full vigour and efficiency.[2]

Even the young court was now drifting away from Williams. By an intrigue of the Shuvalovs the Grand Duke had been partially alienated from the Grand Duchess,[3] and Austria, aided by Poniatowski,[4] attempted with some success to convert him from his Prussian inclinations by making a treaty of subsidy with him as Duke of Holstein.[5] Even the Grand Duchess, now that her lover Poniatowski had returned to Petersburg as the agent of the King of Poland, gradually lost touch with Williams, and their secret correspondence languished,[6] although Catherine was as profuse as ever in assurances of personal and political esteem when she did write. Williams was, therefore, in these last months a mere spectator at Petersburg, and at the same time he was cut off from Western Europe by the stoppage of posts and couriers on Russia's frontiers. He was delighted [7] to receive permission to leave Petersburg, and lost no time in taking his audience of leave [8] of the Empress, who replied by proxy to his flowery oration in a style that was cold to the verge of incivility. Even now, however, he was loath actually to leave the court of Petersburg,[9] and his departure was, in fact, postponed partly by

[1] Williams to Holderness, 8 February, 7 June, 1757.

[2] Havrincourt to Rouillé, 11 November, 1756, in A.E. Russie, 51, f. 69; Williams to Holderness, 15 February, 1757; Yorke to Holderness (private), 1 March, 1757, in Add. MSS. 35436, f. 131; Keith to Holderness, 19/30 March, 1758.

[3] Herzen Memoir, 238, 256–63, etc.; Catherine to Williams (undated) and 2 July, O.S. (Goriainow, 334, 341); *Cour de Russie*, 174.

[4] Poniatowski, 210.

[5] Williams to Holderness, 26 July. Keith reported on 19/30 March, 1758, that "the Grand Duke is absolutely in the hands of the French party," but this conversion was not lasting. (Keith to Holderness, 29 September/10 October.)

[6] Although the editions of the letters are admittedly incomplete, the correspondence seems practically to have ceased in January, 1757. *Cf.*, however, *supra*, p. 251, n. 2, for two unpublished letters from Catherine to Williams subsequent to this date.

[7] Williams to Holderness (private), 1 July (Newport Papers).

[8] Williams to Holderness, 12 July.

[9] "I took my leave of this court last Saturday, but not with an intention of quitting it. . . . I fully intend to be here till 1 September" (Williams to

accident, partly by design [1] on his part to remain at Petersburg as long as possible in the hope of the Empress's death. Illness, real or assumed, at first delayed his preparations for his departure. At one time he had decided to go through Poland, but was deterred by news that bands of Russian irregulars were still maintaining a reign of terror in Lithuania; but he actually set out by way of Finland on 1 September. Before he had gone forty miles he was seized with an attack of fever, and returned to Petersburg extremely ill. Land-travel being out of the question for some time, he then hired an English merchant-vessel to convey him to Copenhagen. Contrary winds detained the vessel at Cronstadt, and, after waiting on board for "near a fortnight," the impatient ambassador again returned to Petersburg, where he arrived shortly after it was known that the Empress had had an apoplectic fit [2] and that Apraksin had retreated from Prussia,[3] and thus confirmed the rumours that his delay was due to design and not to accident. Finally, he left Petersburg on 8 October, and, travelling through Finland and Sweden, reached Stockholm on 30 October.

Once safely out of the Russian dominions Williams's spirits revived, and he bustled about at the Swedish court with all his customary activity,[4] visiting the chief ministers and dining with them along with "ce qu'il y a de plus distingué ici dans les deux sexes." [5] Britain had for long had no regular representative at Stockholm, but depended for news of that court upon occasional letters from Baron Karl Gedda, who used the pen-name of "Wilkinson." Williams, apparently on his own authority, arranged for the transmission by "Wilkinson" of regular news in a special cipher, and he himself carried a copy of the cipher to Titley, the British minister at Copenhagen, through whom

Mitchell, 12 July, in Add. MSS. 6824, f. 166). This letter refutes the Ilchester-Langford-Brooke contention, in their translation of *Catherine's Correspondence with Williams*, 22 n., that Williams's delay in leaving Russia was involuntary.

[1] So contemporaries thought: Holderness to Mitchell, 14 October, in Add. MSS. 32875, f. 94; Goriaïnow, xxvi.

[2] Rineking to Holderness, 27 September, S.P.F., Russia.

[3] Williams to Holderness, 4 October.

[4] Full reports of his activities from Lieutenant Robert Campbell and "Wilkinson" in S.P.F., Sweden, 103.

[5] "Wilkinson's" letter of 11 November in S.P.F., Sweden, 103.

future communications were to pass.[1] Williams arrived at Copenhagen on 15 November, and made a prolonged stay [2] in the expectation of meeting Keith, his successor designate, to whom he was very anxious to give full lights on the court of Petersburg. During the five weeks of his stay at Copenhagen Titley communicated to him his instructions to try and secure a defensive alliance with Denmark. Williams had frequent conferences with the Danish ministers, dined once a week in private with the King, and made such an impression that Titley had some hope that his visit, in conjunction with Prussian victories in Germany, might lead to Denmark's acceptance of a defensive alliance with Britain, which had been rejected earlier in the year,[3] but was now more eagerly than ever desired by the British Government. Williams's mood characteristically had changed from deepest depression to uncritical optimism, and his reports of his private conversations encouraged Titley to propose formally the conclusion of a defensive alliance between Denmark and Britain. Titley fortunately discovered his mistake in time, and, to avoid the bad effect of a second refusal of British overtures, withdrew the proposition he had made while under Williams's influence. This last episode in Williams's diplomatic career is entirely unimportant, but shows that to the very end his eagerness to serve his King, and thereby to increase his own importance, led him into officious meddling with matters not merely beyond his instructions, but beyond his competence. Williams had graduated from the hard school of experience at Petersburg with his vanity and self-confidence apparently unimpaired.

By the end of December he was at Hamburg [4] awaiting Keith's arrival. After giving his successor full information about the interior of the Russian court he left for Cuxhaven, where a warship was waiting to convey him to England. Ice, however, prevented his departure, and he had to return to Hamburg on 27 January, and spent another three weeks there before leaving for

[1] Titley to Holderness, 11 March (apart/private), 1758.
[2] Full reports from Titley in S.P.F., Denmark.
[3] S.P.F., Denmark ; *cf.* Holderness to Newcastle, 4 September, in Add. MSS. 32873, f. 462.
[4] Philip Stanhope to Holderness, 27 December, etc., in S.P.F., Germany (States).

England, which he reached at the end of February. It was apparently during the period of his second residence at Hamburg that his mind gave way completely.[1]

By this time the court of Petersburg had changed almost beyond recognition. The Grand Duke, through his enmity to the Grand Duchess, was apparently a convert to France and Austria. Poniatowski had been recalled from Petersburg. The Great Chancellor during the acute phase of the Empress's illness had thrown off the galling yoke of the Shuvalovs, had perfected the plans for securing the succession of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess,[2] and had even, it is said, recalled troops to Petersburg to strengthen his hands against them.[3] Shortly after the recovery of the Empress he was arrested, stripped of his decorations, and imprisoned.[4] The Grand Duchess, deprived simultaneously of her lover and her mentor, and dreading the discovery of compromising documents among the Great Chancellor's papers,[5] had no alternative but to crave the Empress's mercy and to simulate a complete submission to her will.[6] The "young court" had ceased to exist as a political force, and the only consolation which Williams may have felt at the failure of his mission to Petersburg disappeared with it.

After a brilliant beginning his embassy to Petersburg had proved as futile and unsuccessful as his earlier missions to Dresden and Berlin, Warsaw and Vienna. Few diplomatists have such a record of unmitigated failure. At every court to which he was sent Williams sooner or later rendered his recall imperative. He quarrelled with Frederick the Great; he wrangled with Maria Theresa and Kaunitz; after some years' residence at Dresden he broke violently with Brühl; at Petersburg he offended the Empress, quarrelled with the Great Chancellor, and, but for the sound advice of the Grand Duchess,

[1] See his letters of 5 February, 1758, to Frederick II and Mitchell, in Add. MSS. 6864, ff. 23 and 20 respectively; *cf.* Walpole, *Letters*, iv, 128; Chesterfield, *Letters* (ed. Bradshaw), iii, 1211–3; Wortley Montagu, *Letters* (ed. Wharncliffe), iii, 160. On the last months of his life see Locke, *Hanbury Family*, 220–1; Coxe, *Monmouthshire*, ii, 278–9.

[2] Catherine, *Memoirs*, 258.

[3] Yorke to Newcastle, 29 November, in Add. MSS. 32876, f. 168.

[4] Herzen Memoir, 299–300; Bain, 239–40.

[5] Catherine, *Memoirs*, 258.

[6] Herzen Memoir, 326–41; *Cour de Russie*, 174.

would probably have followed a line of conduct which would have led to his own expulsion from Russia and would have embroiled the relations of Britain and Russia. The mere enumeration of these facts proves that Williams was pre-eminently unsuited for the diplomatic life. No matter how bad the relations of his Government were with the courts at which he resided, it was surely unnecessary for the British minister, by quarrelling personally with the sovereigns and ministers with whom he had to transact business, to make relations worse. A distinction must, however, be drawn between his failure at Berlin and Dresden, which was due almost entirely to his own fault, and at Vienna and Petersburg, for which his Government was largely responsible. His mission to Vienna was a fool's errand, and no good could have come of it no matter how skilful the envoy. At Petersburg, after success appeared to be within his grasp, the *volte-face* of his own Government deprived him of it, and the rashness and folly of the King of Prussia made failure irremediable. The growing coldness between Britain and Russia lay in the logic of events after Frederick had invaded Saxony and Britain had definitely decided to support Prussia, which Russia, with the help of Austria and the connivance of France, was determined to crush. Williams's conduct intensified this coldness, but did not exercise a decisive influence on the relations of Britain and Russia, and the coldness increased rather than diminished after Williams had been succeeded by Robert Keith.[1]

The longer the Seven Years War lasted and the more desperate the situation of Prussia, the greater was the danger of an open rupture between Britain and Russia. This danger was averted by the moderation and caution of Robert Keith; by the repeated refusal of the British Government, at the expense of gravely indisposing Frederick II against them, to send a squadron to the Baltic; and, above all, by the commercial interests of Russia, which would have been seriously affected by a breach with Britain. The death of Elizabeth in January 1762 saved Frederick II and ended this period of unusual tension in the relations of Britain and Russia. Russia under Peter III, and later Catherine II, became the ally of Prussia, but the unswerving

[1] See Keith's reports in S.P.F., Russia.

hostility of Frederick to the Tory Government, which he believed had basely deserted and betrayed him, prevented the definite inclusion of Britain in the alliance, as Catherine and Williams had planned. Nevertheless Catherine was consistently well disposed towards Britain, and her early association with Williams was undoubtedly one factor—though not a major one—which contributed to her friendship with Britain and her alliance with Prussia. By introducing Poniatowski to the future Empress Williams gave her a personal interest in the affairs of Poland, which showed itself in the foreign policy of the early years of her reign. Catherine's persistent intervention in Poland brought about a crisis which otherwise might not have come until considerably later, when the peculiar diplomatic circumstances which produced the first partition of Poland would not have been operative. Into this realm of speculation it is unnecessary to enter, since nothing is further from my purpose than to suggest that Williams's stay at Petersburg was the final cause of the partition of Poland. My intention is merely to indicate that his contribution to the political education of the Grand Duchess was not entirely without influence upon the foreign policy [1] of the future Empress, while Poniatowski's contribution to her "sentimental education" had indirect political results of which Williams never dreamed.[2]

Little lasting influence upon the affairs of Europe can be assigned to the schemes which jostled each other in Williams's fertile imagination. His plans for preserving the peace of Europe by securing the election of a King of the Romans and of a successor to the King of Poland both came to nothing. In their attempt, however, to secure the former the British Government alienated still further their Austrian ally and increased the enmity of the King of Prussia towards themselves; and both of these results were accentuated by the behaviour of Williams at the courts of Vienna and Berlin. Neither his plan nor his conduct, however, proved a decisive factor in the future relations of

[1] Poniatowski, 178.

[2] Williams prophesied to Catherine (26 November, O.S., 1756; (Goriaïnow, 287)): "Je me flatte qu'un jour vous, Monsieur [Catherine] et le roi de Prusse pour votre lieutenant, le [Poniatowski] ferez roi de Pologne." A merciful providence kept him in ignorance of subsequent developments.

Great Britain with Austria and Prussia. But his ingenuity in suggesting the election of a King of the Romans as a reason for subsidising foreign princes had enabled Newcastle to overcome the opposition of his colleagues to the establishment of a system of subsidy treaties in time of peace. This innovation in British foreign policy, of which Pitt was the bitterest opponent, seemed at the time mere waste of British money, and had no direct result except to add to the existing causes of dispute between Britain and France, a fruitless competition in purchasing the venal princes of Germany. The payment of subsidies on a small scale in time of peace may, however, have helped to familiarise the British Parliament and public with the idea of giving subsidies to Continental allies, and probably made it easier for Pitt to obtain Parliamentary sanction for the enormous war subsidies which he paid to Prussia in order to conquer a colonial empire on the battlefields of Central Europe.

In another and much more direct way Williams may be claimed as an unconscious architect of the British Empire. His one great achievement was the Anglo-Russian subsidy treaty. No single clause of this treaty was ever executed, but it had momentous consequences for the history of Europe and of the world, since it induced Frederick II to make the Convention of Westminster, and thus set the stage for the Diplomatic Revolution and the Seven Years War. Had Williams failed to conclude the Anglo-Russian treaty Britain would have had to face her life-and-death struggle with France without the assistance of any important Continental ally. The conclusion by Williams of the treaty was the first and certainly not the least important of the steps which extended the maritime war to the Continent, and gave Britain the alliance of Prussia. Contrary to the probabilities in 1756, Britain after seven years of war won a decisive victory over her maritime and colonial rival, thanks to the resources built up by Walpole, to the organising genius of the elder Pitt, to the ability of British generals and admirals, and to the bravery and devotion of humbler men; but, above all, to the fact that the energies and resources of France were fatally distracted by the double war which she was compelled to wage in Europe and beyond.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF PRIMARY AUTHORITIES

(*A*) MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

I. PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, LONDON (see *Lists and Indexes*, vols. xix and xli)

(1) *State Papers Foreign*

(*a*) S.P.F., Denmark (1757–8); France (1749–54); Germany (Empire) (1748–57); Germany (States), Hamburg (1757–8); Holland (1747, 1749, 1753, 1755–7); Poland (1747–55); Prussia (1747–58); Russia (1747–58); Sweden (1757–8).

Note.—Letters to and from Sir Charles Hanbury Williams and other ministers cited in the footnotes without mention of any source will be found in the appropriate volume of these series of despatches.

(*b*) S.P.F., Foreign Ministers, 12 (Germany (Empire), 1735–80); 36 (Poland, 1702–51); 48 (Prussia, 1737–52); 54 (Russia, 1754–80).

(*c*) S.P.F., Royal Letters, 26 (Saxony, 1689–1780); 42 (Poland, 1740–80); 47 (Prussia, 1731–59); 51 (Russia, 1740–77).

(*d*) S.P.F., Treaty Papers, 55 (Poland, 1577–1768); 62 (Russia, 1741–55); 115 (Miscellaneous, 1741–50); 116 Miscellaneous, 1749–54).

(*e*) S.P.F., Treaties, 376 (Ratification of the States-General of the Treaty of 2/13 September 1751); 384 (Treaty of Alliance of 2/13 September, 1751, between Great Britain, Poland, and the States-General); 385 (Ratification of the foregoing by Poland, 18/29 October); 438 (Treaty of 19/30 September, 1755, with ratification (subsequently cancelled)).

(*f*) S.P.F., Confidential, 63–77 [intercepted despatches].

(2) *Foreign Office Papers*

F.O., Kings' Letters, 47 (Poland, 1739–59); 53 (Prussia, 1737–1760); 57A (Russia, 1741–59).

(3) (*a*) Pells General Posting Books, E. 403, 2677–8.

(*b*) Pells Issue Books, E. 403, 1946–7.

Note.—These two series of volumes give full details of all payments, ordinary and extraordinary, made to foreign

ministers, and also dates of appointment, etc. Series (*b*), being arranged chronologically, is less easy to search than series (*a*), in which the entries are ' posted ' to the accounts of the various ministers. See for further details note by the present writer in the *English Historical Review*, xliii, 606.

II. British Museum, London

(1) *Additional MSS.* See *List* (*Catalogue*) *of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 1836–1910, and relevant indices (London, 1843–1912).

(*a*) Dayrolle Papers : Add. MSS. 15869–75, Official diplomatic correspondence of James Dayrolle and Solomon Dayrolle (1747–57). 15881–2, Letter-books of James and Solomon Dayrolle (1747–57). 15887–8, Transcripts of letters in the correspondence of Solomon Dayrolle [includes some letters not included among the other Dayrolle Papers in the British Museum].

(*b*) Hardwicke Papers : Add. MSS. 35355–7, Correspondence of Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke, with Sir Joseph Yorke (1749–59). 35363–4, Correspondence of Philip Yorke, 2nd Earl of Hardwicke, with Sir Joseph Yorke (1742–58). 35385, Correspondence of Charles Yorke with Sir Joseph Yorke (1742–69). 35409–18, Political Correspondence of Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke, with the Duke of Newcastle (1747–59). 35423, Political Correspondence of Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke, with Mr Pelham (1743–54). 35432, Letters of Sir Joseph Yorke to H. V. Jones, Under-Secretary of State (1752–4). 35433, Political Papers, etc., of Sir Joseph Yorke. 35435–7, Letter-books of Sir Joseph Yorke (private letters) (1753–8). 35439–42, Letter-books of Sir Joseph Yorke (official despatches) (1753–8). 35445, Newsletters (1750–4). 35461–82, Correspondence of Robert Keith, Minister Plenipotentiary at Vienna (1748–59). 35486–93, Diplomatic Letter-books of Robert Keith, Minister Plenipotentiary at Vienna (1748–62). 35496–9, Diplomatic Letter-books of James Porter, Ambassador to Constantinople (1748–57). 35602, [Correspondence between Sir C. H. Williams and the Lord Chancellor, 1745]. 36056, Notes on cases [f. 17, Williams's suit against his wife].

(*c*) Hyndford Papers : Add. MSS. 11383–7, State papers, diplomatic instructions, and letters . . . relative to the public affairs in which the Earl of Hyndford was engaged, 1747–9.

(*d*) Keith Papers. See Hardwicke Papers : Add. MSS. 35461–82 and 35486–93.

(*e*) Mitchell Papers : Add. MSS. 6804–6, Letter-books of Andrew Mitchell (1756–7). 6811–3, Despatches to Andrew Mitchell from the Earl of Holderness (1756–7). 6823, Despatches to Andrew Mitchell from the Under-Secretaries of State (1756–7). 6824, Letters addressed to Andrew Mitchell by English Ambassadors in Russia (1756–7). 6832, Letters addressed to Andrew Mitchell by the Duke of Newcastle and the Earl of Holderness (1756–7). 6843–4, Letters from the King of Prussia to Andrew Mitchell (1756–8). 6864, Letters from Sir Charles Hanbury Williams and Eichel to Andrew Mitchell with relative enclosures. 6871, Letters to the Earl of Holderness.

(*f*) Newcastle Papers : Add. MSS. 32704–37, Home Correspondence (1745–54). 32806–51, Diplomatic Correspondence (1746–54). 32852–87, General Correspondence (1755–9). 32993–7, Memoranda of the Duke of Newcastle (1748–58). 33009–25, Diplomatic Papers (1746–1760).

(*g*) Porter Papers. See Hardwicke Papers, Add. MSS. 35496–9.

(*h*) Robinson Papers : Add. MSS. 23824–9, Original Despatches and Letters addressed to Thomas Robinson, etc. (1747–50). 23874–7, Robinson's Letter-books, etc. (1747–50).

(*i*) Miscellaneous Papers : Add. MSS. 28727, Original Letters addressed to Peter Collinson [f. 56, Letter from Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, dated 16 July 1758]. 32271, 32278, and 32288, Deciphers of despatches passing between the Prussian, Saxon, and Russian Governments and their ministers in England, etc.

(2) *Egerton MSS.* See *Index to the Egerton Collection* (London, 1849), and subsequent volumes of the *List* (*Catalogue*) *of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, v.y.).

Eg., 1732, Journal of W. Bentinck for 1751. 2694, [Letter from Colonel R. Campbell *re* the health of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, dated 7 May, 1758]. 2695, Diary of Walter Titley, Envoy to the King of Denmark.

(3) *Stowe MSS.* See *Catalogue of the Stowe Manuscripts* (London, 1895–6).

Stowe, 253 and 256 [Various extracts from the papers of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, (1751–6)]. 263 [Copies of various letters addressed to Sir Charles Hanbury Williams by H. Fox, H. Digby, and G. Hanbury (1756–7)].

III. Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris

An *Inventaire Sommaire* is in process of publication, but has not yet reached the countries mentioned below.

(1) Correspondance politique Saxe, 1746–54.
" " Pologne, 1750–4.
" " Russie, 1755–8.
(2) Saxe, Supplément 2 and 3.
Russie, Supplément 8 and 9.
(3) Mémoires et Documents, Russie, 5.

IV. Newport Public Library, Newport (Mon.)

See report by the present writer in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, ii, 61–2. The papers preserved at Newport apparently formed part of Sir C. H. Williams's papers, which, according to Shelburne (Fitzmaurice, *Life of Shelburne*, i, 132), were returned to his family after his death by a French mistress with whom he had left them. Shelburne's memorandum is, however, so inaccurate in other respects that his statement on this point may be regarded with some suspicion. Another part of Sir C. H. Williams's papers is in the possession of Mr Fenwick, Thirlestane House, Cheltenham, who refused to allow the present writer to examine them.

(1) Letters and instructions from the Earl of Holderness to Sir C. H. Williams (6 vols., 1754–7) [contains a few autograph letters from Lord Holderness, copies of which are not included in the State Papers Foreign at the Public Record Office, nor in the British Museum MSS.].
(2) Sir C. H. Williams's Letter-books (4 vols., 1752–7).
(3) Letters received by Sir C. H. Williams from Andrew Mitchell (1 vol., 1756–7).
(4) Letters written by Sir C. H. Williams to Andrew Mitchell (1 vol., 1756–7).
(5) États des finances de la France et mémoires et lettres touchant la Barrière reçu à Vienne (1 vol., 1748–52).
(6) Journal begun at Berlin in June 1750 and carried on to 4 March, 1751, by Sir C. H. Williams (1 vol.).
(7) Diplomatic and other papers received by Sir C. H. Williams, and bound up in January 1753 (1 vol.) [contains (*a*) papers relating to the *Steuer* and to Polish affairs; (*b*) drafts of letters from Sir C. H. Williams to the Duke of Newcastle; (*c*) miscellaneous letters and papers].
(8) Original autograph letters to Sir C. H. Williams from Horace Walpole the elder, Horace Walpole the younger, H. B. Legge, Earl of Chesterfield, Sir R. Walpole, H. Pelham, etc. (1 vol.). [The letters from Horace Walpole the younger were published

recently in the second supplementary volume of the *Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. Toynbee.]

(9) Diplomatic letters and papers received by Sir C. H. Williams (1 vol., 1751–2).

(10) Letters and papers received by Sir C. H. Williams from the Duke of Newcastle (1 vol., 1753).

(11) Loose original letters from H. Fox and others to Sir C. H. Williams.

(12) Loose papers in a folder, including draft of Sir C. H. Williams's speech on the convention with Spain (1738–9).

(*B*) PRINTED SOURCES

I. Collections of Documents

The word or words preceding the colon are those under which the work is cited. The full title follows.

Archives : Archives ou correspondance inédite de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau (4e Série, ed. Th. Bussemaker ; Leyden, 1908).

Archives Voronzov : Archives Voronzov (ed. Bartenev ; Moscow, v.y.).

Chesterfield, *Letters : Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield* (ed. Bradshaw ; London, 1892).

Cour de Russie : La Cour de Russie il y a cent ans, 1725–83 (ed. A. I. Turgenev ; Berlin, 1858).

Farges : See *Recueil des Instructions.*

Goriaïnow : *Correspondance de Catherine Alexéievna, Grande Duchesse de Russie, et de Sir Charles H. Williams* (ed. Goriaïnow ; Moscow, 1909).

Lippert : W. Lippert, *Kaiserin Maria Theresia und Kurfürstin Maria Antonia von Sachsen Briefwechsel, 1747–72* (Leipsig, 1908).

Marchmont Papers : *A Selection from the Papers of the Earl of Marchmont in the Possession of the Right Hon. Sir George Henry Rose* (London, 1831).

Martens : *Recueil des traités conclus par la Russie* (ed. Martens ; St Petersburg, v.y.).

O.S. : Oesterreichische Staatsverträge : England (ed. Pribram ; Vienna, 1913).

Pol. Corr. : Politische Correspondenz Friedrichs des Grossen (Berlin, v.y.).

Preuss. Staats. : Preussische Staatsschriften aus der Regierungszeit König Friedrichs II (ed. Droysen and Koser ; Berlin, 1885).

Rambaud : See *Recueil des Instructions.*

Recueil des Instructions : Recueil des Instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France depuis les Traités de Westphalie jusqu'à la Révolution française (Paris, v.y.).

Sorel : Autriche, vol. i.

Farges : Pologne, vols. iv and v.

Rambaud : Russie, vols. viii and ix.

Waddington : Prusse, vol. xvi.

Sorel: See *Recueil des Instructions.*

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